



CHRISTOPHER CARDEW writes in a style which reflects the complexities of his own nature, a nature shaped and moulded by the extremities of life both seen and experienced.

Born in 1928 in Ceylon and son of a tea planter, the author received his schooling in England, then served three years in the army before being medically discharged. He has worked since then in East Africa as a coffee planter, then later in West Africa in Insurance and finally into teaching.

It was then that Christopher Cardew began writing seriously, and has now become established as a mystical writer of note.

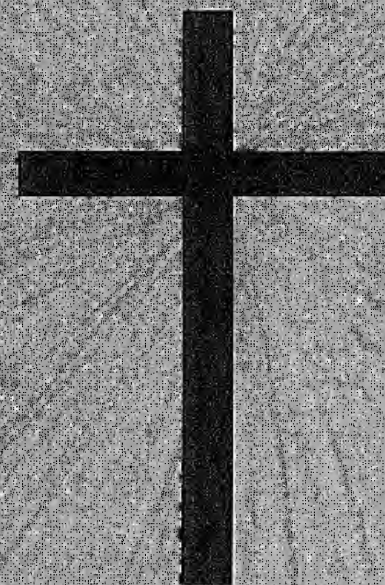
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CHRISTOPHER CARDEW

THE LEGEND OF THE CROSS



The Legend Of The Cross



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THE LEGEND OF THE CROSS

It would be a shallow mind indeed which would refuse to pay attention to the utterances of a visionary. We all see as in a glass darkly, but some see less darkly than others.

The Legend of The Cross will recall the writings of Bunyon, Blake and, to some extent, Dante. Few of us meditate sufficiently on the Cross, and consequently its message passes us by. But in the Legend, none of us, even the most learned, can fail to find some thought which will cast a light on the significance of that tremendous emblem.

Christopher Cardew has become well established as a modern mystical writer; but in none of his earlier writings has he attained to the height or the depth of The Legend of The Cross.

THE LEGEND OF THE CROSS

CHRISTOPHER CARDEW

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‘ And his disciples came to him, and said, Why do you speak to them in parables? Because, he answered, it is granted to you to understand the secrets of God’s kingdom, but not to these others. If a man is rich, gifts will be made to him, and his riches will abound; if he is poor, even the little he has will be taken from him. And if I talk to them in parables, it is because, though they have eyes, they cannot see, and though they have ears, they cannot hear or understand. Indeed, in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, You will listen and listen, but for you there is no understanding; you will watch and watch, but for you there is no perceiving. The heart of this people has become dull, their ears are slow to listen, and they keep their eyes shut, so that they may never see with those eyes, or hear with those ears, or understand with that heart, and turn back to me, and win healing from me. ’

(Matt. 13:10-15)

By the same author:
My Kingdom for a Dream

FOREWORD

The salvation of the World through the Cross of Christ was 'to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness'. It is both universal for the whole of mankind, but also uniquely personal for each individual.

Christopher Cardew has given his own understanding of this universal and yet unique event in a personal vision as it appears to him. He has written with great passion and force in a most moving manner. To many this book would strike a chord with their own understanding. To others it would be in the wrong idiom, but they would nevertheless recognize the sincerity and integrity with which Mr Cardew writes. I am happy to pay this tribute to his work in a short foreword.

20th January, 1974

Paul Burrough,
Bishop of Mashonaland,
Rhodesia.

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PROLOGUE

'What is veiled will all be revealed, what is hidden will all be known; what I have said to you under cover of darkness, you are to utter in the light of day; what has been whispered in your ears, you are to proclaim on the house-tops.'
(Matt. 10:26,27)

* * * * *

Life flows through me like a river; although I, too, bear with me the marks of toil and suffering. But my work is not yet finished, for I know that my task is to return to my time and age, spend myself, and pass on to others that which I have been most privileged to see and undergo; I must impart the love and knowledge I have gained upon the way — qualities which will grow and deepen with the passing years, but which are bearing heavily and wearing on my physical strength.

Sadly, though, these qualities of love and knowledge can be given only with circumspection; for Man is still an irrational beast whose eyes are most often turned inwards towards himself. Man should seek to stretch upwards, so that in time he might be able to look beyond his own petty nature and see the greater Life from which he sprang; to the Godhead which can be

his for the earning and taking.

Doubtless it will be said by some that I have presented Christianity as a forbidding spectre, ominous and sombre. Not so, although I do think that most people — for their own comfort of body, mind and spirit — project a flexible and fallible Christ of their own dimensions; a Christ to suit their own wayward conveniences; an undemanding Christ; a Christ whose place can be taken by dogma and ritual, candle, incense, cape and mitre; but only rarely the tremendously vital reality that lies at the heart and source of Life itself.

In the beginning Man was born in Light, but then, through the disobedience of Adam and Eve in their freedom of spirit, Sin also emerged from the recalcitrant will in Man — and Man was cast into the night with Sin as his companion.

It is through this long night that we must live, aspire, and earn our freedom of spirit if we are to become once again the children of Light. In the Light our seed was planted and given root; now we must grow and flourish in the night, sustained through our wish and courage by means of our link with the eternal Light which nurtured us from our birth, or else rot in the darkness, die and wither away.

This, my friends, is the challenge put upon every single human soul born into the bondage of this World. It is a challenge we can very easily ignore; for the Light from which we sprang is a spiritual Light, whereas the obscuring light of nature which lightens the World is a physical light.

Therefore — to the Prevaricators of Truth, to the greedy and the merely mundane, to all who shorten their sights for the conveniences of the moments in

which they live, to those who play the coward and lack the courage to think and fight, and to the faint-hearted who fear to walk alone — I say, 'You will live well in the light of the World, as you will also be one with the World and cling to the shroud and bounty of Lucifer: but be warned, for God will not be mocked; your day is short, the reckoning near, and soon — when the natural night follows on after the natural day — you will perish for want of sustenance.'

'While the individual lives out his short span, and while the day of the World lasts, the World will sustain its own, and even give tantalizingly to those special children of its loins; but with the passing of the natural day, nature will turn and exact its toll with ruthless implacability from those it has fed, and even more so from those it has upheld in comfort.'

To put the matter more plainly still: 'Those who live by the Light of the spirit must suffer in the World of their enemy, and at the hands of the children of Nature; but, if these do not slip and weaken, they will rise above their bondage to the World, and then from state to state until, in the timeless future, they will reach their source and Godhead.'

'Whereas those who live by the light and values of the World will only sink and perish when the natural light ceases to support them; for the World is transitory, dependent on higher sources for its own life, and this is a stage which will pass, must pass, at least for Man; since we cannot move always only in time and amidst things material, which, although they change, have only borrowed life, and no source of greater life within themselves.'

Man has been given the power within himself to draw closer to God, to follow the pattern of perfection,

to acquire an independence in strength and beauty, and thus to rise and grow; and yet, all the while, is hedged about by the limitations imposed on him by Nature's lower vibratory state.

But Man has also the choice to let go, to sink and to satisfy his more carnal nature: a part of his more physical self which, while not being evil in itself, does provide a lower vibratory state in which wrong thoughts can more easily breed, exist, and even thrive from the free, creative mind of Man.

Man is boundless in his freedom: there are no limits set to his achievements, no state too high that he cannot rise to meet it; but, conversely, there are no limits set to the depravity of his soul, no depths so low that he cannot sink to embrace them.

However, the task of rising is not easy, for the light of Nature actually tends to disguise and hide the higher Light of Truth; the coarse light of the World which, in this our lower state, only shrouds the more effectively as and where it flames the brighter — this is a deceptive condition since, in fact, the cruder light of the World is wholly subordinate to the ultra-refined Light of Spirit.

Life is complex, deep and filled with pitfalls to catch the unwary, and none of us can see to its extremities. Always there is mystery piled on mystery; knowledge being a tempting mistress who invariably walks ahead, dragging behind her a net full of problems to be solved and overcome. None the less, the patterns for our living have been laid for us to follow; so that along this road — if we walk it with a seeking mind — we will gradually, in this sphere or that state, unravel its secrets and advance upon our way.

And now I am restless and ill at ease, for my body is

having difficulty in submitting to the stretching growth of my spirit which burns hotly for release. Therefore, in the present and the now in time, let this work of mine stand as it is. I have given to it all I have, and that which I have written, I have written with reflection and depth, and in a spirit of far-sighted inspiration and truth.

THE LEGEND OF THE CROSS

I felt free and more wholly myself than ever before as I floated weightless along woodland paths, drawn on by some power or finer instinct within me. It was a strange and wonderful feeling — not altogether unknown to those who dream vividly, but even then only a rare and watered-down copy of the reality I was now experiencing.

In a sense I was timeless, although I moved in time; my mind was mine, and yet more complete, more whole, more me; my freedom from earthly ties, time and gravity, was a transcending experience impossible of true explanation; for while I was little more than an observer, yet I felt close to Life, to God, filled with a joyous strength and keenness of perception such as we can never, never know while bound within our bodies.

Here thought was power, delicate, sensitive, but with immense latent reserves, and to be wielded as one willed. Here, too, my feelings of love, pity, and a myriad others, were welded most perfectly with my greater mind, and so finely that the scales in balance between any sides of myself were in symphonic harmony, tilting neither too much one way, nor too much the other.

I felt close to God, and even one with Him; for His spirit filled me through and through. Yet at the same time I was myself, a person original and without copy

throughout the Universe; free to do as I wished, although in fact a most willing servant in Christ.

On I wandered, wraithlike amongst the trees and leafy boughs, feeling neither the oppressive heat of the plains and open fields, nor the cool within the woods; but sensitive to the growth and life about me, and to the thought patterns, good or bad, vivid or stagnant, which moved or hung in the air.

By these I knew that I wandered in the Holy Land at the same time as Jesus lived and preached. I wanted to see Him, to meet Him in person, and so moved forward more urgently until I burst upon a small clearing.

Here I stopped suddenly as though an invisible hand barred my way; but then I realized it was the tree that had pulled me up, majestic, wonderful, and quite beyond compare — a tall cypress standing alone in the middle of a sloping glade, perhaps ninety feet or more in height, a king in the midst of its subjects, and bearing with it such a grace in growth, such a perfection in proportion and the sweep of its branches that, for a moment, I was held spellbound, able only to gaze and gaze and never grow tired.

However, my attention was soon distracted by sounds and movements on the other side of the glade. Moving to one side and looking over, I saw walking towards me an old man and a young boy. The man could not have been under sixty, though toil and suffering had worn him past his years; but still he carried his strength lightly, in spite of his white hair and heavily grizzled beard, for he was broad and strongly built, and moved with an assurance and firmness which showed in good support of his fine face and kindly eyes.

The lad beside him — whom I felt was his grandson — tripped lightly by the old man, often talking and looking up into the lined face above him, and in his eyes was a look of love and dependence so great that I wondered at it, concluding that these two must be alone in the World, without any near kith or kin.

Then I saw a most wonderful thing; for as the two approached the great tree, the old man clapped his hands and called upwards and downwards, at the same time walking around the bole and over the huge roots.

The young boy came and stood by me — though he did not know it — and waited, his face a picture of delightful anticipation. In a moment I saw that he was fair-haired and comely, slightly-built, and not more than eleven years of age — a most unusual boy to be a Jew, since few of them are fair of face, and fewer still are graced with beauty.

I turned again to the old man. He had stopped walking round the tree, and was taking a few paces backwards, talking softly and soothingly as he moved — almost as if he was trying to woo the very soul from the great tree to come to him.

But before I could wonder further on this amazing scene, I heard a rustling and flap of wings from the foliage over my head. In a moment, with swoop or whirl or graceful glide, their wings glinting and scintillating, or brown or dull or friendly, the birds responded to his voice, circling about him, then landing on his outstretched arms, or on the ground at his feet.

I had never seen anything like this before in my life, and was amazed that any man in mortal flesh could have so much power in him, so much love, to be able

to charm the wild birds from their nests, to do with them as he wished.

The old man's face shone like that of an angel as he called to the boy at my side. Slowly, and walking carefully, the lad stepped away from me and towards his grandfather with his feathered friends. The birds ceased from nibbling at the old man's ears, or pecking at his sandals, and appeared uncertain; but did not stir from where they stood or perched. They were not quite sure of this boy, though they still responded to the man's gentle, chiding voice as he called to them by name.

Then their hands met, the young and the old, and the faint taint of fear was broken as if by magic; so that some of the birds ran along the old man's arm, over their linked hands, and on down to the boy's shoulder, while those on the ground wandered about between them as they willed.

It was when I looked down at the ground again that I noticed several small animals as well. There was a pair of hedgehogs snuffling towards the old man's feet, followed by three of their babies, little soft-spiked balls with sharp, black, indiarubber noses; and over there, just emerging from a den between two great roots, was Brock, the badger, grumbling a bit as usual, but wheezing and waddling towards the young boy's feet. Then a couple of rabbits unexpectedly popped up from their burrow, only a pace or two away from me, their entrance so well hidden that I had not noticed it before; they, too, hopped over to the man and boy, followed by a family of four stumbling balls of soft fur, baby-faced and blue-eyed, and scarcely able to focus on their mother's bobbing white scut.

Here, indeed, was a veritable Saint Francis of Assisi,

with animals and birds of all types coming to him; not only from the giant cypress tree, but also from the woods some thirty yards away. I saw a small barn-owl, a late-comer, alight heavily on the old man's shoulder, his eyes hurting and blinking in the shaded light; also field-mice, a weasel, and then a pair of red foxes.

Many came, and each and all were greeted by the old man and the young boy. They stooped and spoke to them, babies were held briefly and admired, old friends were spoken to and stroked — no animal or bird, however small or insignificant, was left without love and attention.

I was entranced, and moved back to be better able to take it all in; for I felt, somehow, that the great tree dominated the scene even more than did the old man and his grandson. My gaze was pulled upwards until only this single tree filled my whole horizon, my whole life; its bounty, beauty, and strength — in some wonderful way — inextricably wound up in my own source.

I knew then that this was the Tree of Life, the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil: a symbol of Man's beginning and fall; and from its coming destruction a symbol of pain and sacrifice; and from its seed and regeneration a living sign of a new and lovely World to come.

The tree's effect on me was overpowering: my senses reeled, and a heavy drowsiness overcame me so that my eyes closed, my tired mind ceased to whirl, and I slept.

* * * * *

Some time later — though how much later I could not

say, time not being a limiting factor in my transient state — I was conscious of drifting down the main street of Ephraim, a small village about eighteen miles north of Jerusalem. The road over which I passed was a dull and dusty red, stretching far away over the hills to either side of the village, and packed hard from the many feet which continually tramped it down on their way to and from Jerusalem.

I was in full memory of all that had passed when I had stood by the great cypress tree in the middle of some unknown wood, but I had no knowledge of anything that had happened since. Nevertheless, I knew that the events I had seen, and those I was about to see would, in some way, become smoothly linked.

It was therefore no surprise to me — after passing several small houses and open-fronted shops — when my presence was drawn towards a tiny alley and to a shop on the corner, a carpenter's shop; for propped against the walls, and within its shady and dark interior, I saw planks and light beams of various widths and lengths, most of it neatly stacked in criss-cross pattern to season in the dry air. It was a meagre supply for one whose trade was a carpenter, unless there was more in the back yard, but it was beautifully laid out and cut, and most of the wood showed a fine grain and quality — obviously a man of patience and care, and very likely a fine craftsman too.

I entered, but there was nobody inside, so I spent some time in looking around the shop. I am an indifferent judge of a carpenter's skill, but I would have been a fool indeed not to recognize this as being the work-place of a master at his trade. The shop was nearly spotless, with few shavings on the floor, although the signs of work were plentiful enough. In

the centre of the room was a gracefully fashioned halter for an ox; it looked to me to be almost a work of art, and carved to fit the beast exactly. While over on the right, and occupying nearly the full depth of the room, was a low, half-finished table, but showing in its joints and accuracy to detail an astonishing degree of care and perfection; why, even now, in this rough stage, it was a thing of beauty and balance.

I looked up at his tools as they hung on the wall in serried, neat array. They were all strange to me, though I was amazed at their crudity and that anyone could achieve such high standards with such very poor work-mates. Nevertheless, everything I saw under construction, and there were many articles small and large, had this same master's touch of skill and artistry.

I shook my head, and thought briefly on the modern mass production methods with all our fine and ingenious tools; but also with their hurried demands on men and machines, the press for greater profits, and the consequent tendency to decline in care and quality of workmanship. Then I passed through the shop — my spectral feet not touching the ground, nor even stirring up the finest dust — and went out into the small back yard through an open doorway.

Here, too, everything was neat and tidy, and the few flowers and shrubs blooming and well kept. Then I noticed the old man whom I had seen earlier with his grandson by the great cypress tree, sitting quiet and still in the corner on my right; so still, in fact, that it was hardly surprising I had not seen him when I walked through the door. His hands were crossed over his knees, and his face now wore an expression of such deep trouble and near-despair that he looked

every bit of seventy years, and not at all the strong and virile man he had appeared in the woods.

My heart went out to him for his face spoke clearly of his honesty and goodness; and there was also something very pathetic in that trouble could strike so hard at a man who gave so much — although I knew well by experience that trouble and strife usually hit the hardest where least deserved.

For a short while I stood watching, knowing myself helpless to give aid, and was about to turn away to allow him privacy when I heard the quick patter of young footsteps running through the shop. The old man heard them too, and his face lit up a trifle at their sound, while his back straightened to receive his welcome visitor.

I stood back just as the boy burst through the doorway into the courtyard. He paused a moment, then, spotting his grandfather in the corner, went quickly to him, talking so excitedly and animatedly that he did not notice the traces of his grandfather's depression.

I listened carefully — for I felt that I must. At first I could make nothing of the language in which they spoke, having no knowledge of Hebrew, Arabic, or any of the dialects from this part of the World. Nevertheless, I continued trying to understand what they were saying. Something inside me prompted and urged me to break through this language barrier; though how I did not bother to consider, but only strained and strained to reach into what they were saying.

Slowly at first, then quicker and more completely, a most wonderful and unique thing happened: I began to read the patterns of their thoughts, a bit here and a

bit there; for they moved with a far, far greater speed than words, however quickly spoken, and my gift of understanding had grown rusty from long years in my finite state.

Thrilled at this success I listened on — only now more with my mind than with my ears — picking up not only the rough drift of their words, but also the far deeper reasons and motives behind them. Consequently I can only record their conversations in modern idiom; for the varied patterns comprising the language of the mind are alike to all people — cruder and shallower here, more refined and deeper there, but fundamentally the same, and understood by any who can receive their waves.

It was plain at first that their minds were on the same subject, although their different approaches were very wide apart. So their conversation, from where I could begin to make sense of it, went something like this:

"But, Grandfather, why?" the lad exclaimed, his face a picture of puzzled disappointment.

"Listen, and I will tell you, and you'll be the only other person in the whole World to know."

I could not help smiling whimsically at that.

"We went to see the tree a week ago today, but since seeing it then I have been assailed with dreams and thoughts such as I cannot ignore — all very strange and wonderful," he nodded reflectively.

"What were they, Grandfather? Do tell me, please!" cried the little boy excitedly.

"What were they? Well, essentially very simple actually — I must cut down the tree . . ."

"No, no! You cannot mean it! Surely there is some mistake?"

"No, Simon, there is no mistake, and we must accept this as God's will. But listen and I will tell you about the dream. Five nights ago an angel came to me while I slept. The whole room was lit up, brighter than day — and you know what my room upstairs is like. Yet this light was nothing like ordinary daylight, for it didn't hurt my eyes even though, in a sense, it was much brighter; but it did cut right inside me, almost as if it was shining from within myself — and yet this was impossible because there, at the end of my bed, stood this angel, clothed in white from head to feet, and as real as you are to me, more real in fact.

"I cannot properly describe the angel, Simon, any better than to say that he was bright with light and spirit, bright with power; and pure, so pure that I felt small and insignificant in his presence. Also, waves of subtle lights and colours sprang from the top of his head like an opening flower, pulsing, swirling and falling all about him as far as his waist — all colours, though chiefly gold, and beautifully patterned."

"What did he say, Grandfather?" whispered the boy, now a little frightened and clinging close to the old man.

"As far as I can remember, Simon, he said this, 'Joseph, son of Abenathar, I have a mission and a message for you; for you have been favoured and chosen by God for some very special work.

"In thirty days from now you will go to the woods near by and cut down the great cypress tree that you know. You will be approached by the owner who will ask what you are doing. You will tell him no more than you have to, whereon he will demand twenty-five pieces of silver as payment for the tree. This money you will find by your bed when you wake in the

morning.

"After you have cut down the tree, you will hew from its main stem the upright of a Roman cross (*crux capitata*), fifteen feet in length and a hand's span square. Then you will carve the cross-piece from its greatest branch, and this is to be six feet in length by five inches wide and three inches deep.

"The main stem and the cross-piece must both be recessed to receive each other two feet from the top of the main stem; but not permanently, for the two sections of the cross must be kept apart once you have carved them to fit exactly."

"But what about the silver, Grandfather? Was it there in the morning as the angel promised?" asked Simon tremulously.

The old man pulled a new leathern purse from his girdle, unfastened its neck, and poured into his left hand the twenty-five pieces of silver the angel had left. "They were there in the morning, Simon, the very same new coins that you can see here, together with the purse."

"And what did the angel say then, Grandfather?" and I could see that the child was deeply stricken. "Why would God want you to cut down that lovely tree? and what will happen to all our birds and animals? they will have no home."

There were tears in Simon's eyes as he spoke these words, his face was about to crumple, and his young heart felt near to breaking; for the great tree and all its creatures were very much a part of this young boy's life. God, his grandfather, and the tree with all its life, were his three mainstays; and now his grandfather had been commanded by an angel to cut down the tree. It was all too much for the child, and he wept bitterly.

Joseph put an arm about the boy's shoulders and pulled him close into his embrace until Simon's fair, young head lay on his chest — this grandson of his who meant so very, very much to him, and whose keen distress now tugged so cruelly at his old heart.

"Simon," he said softly, "you know something about God, for you have heard the Rabbis preaching in the Temple. You know, too, what I have often said to you; that in my heart I cannot think God means us to live by law, and law alone, as our preachers tell us. I am not learned or sophisticated like these men, nor as the Pharisees or the Scribes; I cannot argue as they can argue, placing one point nicely after another, playing with words, until at last they are tied together like a string of beans, logical and precise, so that no simple man such as myself can discern between them to find the truth.

"Since I was a young man, even before, I have felt something very big missing from the lives of our people — even to the essence of Life itself. Now I am quite sure that truth is not in the form in which our Sanhedrin and elders have fashioned it, that life as we should know it is not so sterile, so empty of feeling and love of God, so rigid and undeviating.

"All things will fall according to their predestined patterns, Simon, for we are very little creatures working madly in a darkness of our own making. Furthermore, this predestination is not, at present, in our hands to form and guide, for we, as a people, have fallen far from the Light, and only those few who can see — and act in accordance with what they learn — will climb above that natural self that grips each one of us in its grip of death, and rise as people truly whole and free from sin.

"Our tree first gave me light, real light; so I will always remember the day when I first walked in those woods, deeply troubled in spirit, and came upon it quite unexpectedly. Almost instantly my doubts and fears were blown away like clouds in a strong wind, for there is something about that great, dark cypress that speaks to me in words which are nobler and greater by far than any we hear in the Temple."

Looking up into the rugged old face above his own — every line and furrow of which he knew so well — Simon forgot his tears and listened intently.

"This angel told me something of the past, the present, and the future," went on the old man; "and what he said fits in exactly with the little I felt before, although I knew it only indistinctly. We are about to enter into a new era, a new freedom and a new dimension. Man is to have another chance. What is more, this great tree of ours, of the World's in fact, this tree of Life — so I learned — is to play a vital part in an awful drama which lies very close ahead. By its destruction it will symbolize the passing away of the old, the narrow and the outworn; in the building of the cross from its wood, and in the way it is to be used — though how was not made clear to me — it will become a bloody vehicle to bear away the sins of Man; while in its regeneration it will symbolize the birth of a new World, a painful World, but a World in which love will slowly fight its way to win at last."

Joseph shook his head as though to clear away the dust of dreams.

"Do not ask me any more about it, Simon, for what I have said is what I was told, though not all that I was told. The angel spoke to me clearly, his voice was like a trumpet, but my discernment is poor and feeble and,

at the time, I could not grasp all of his message — often he far outstripped me, until I could neither follow where he led, nor fully unravel the words he spun, nor the scenes and patterns he wove within my head.

"And yet, Simon, he did not speak to me for nothing, nor to baffle me with the enigma of Heaven. Rather were his words designed that I should think and dwell upon their inner message; so that in time, or perhaps with the falling of the events to come so soon, I would be able to understand and read their meaning."

The old man lifted Simon from his lap and stood up, leaving me in some awe of all that he had said. "Come, we have work to do this afternoon," he went on kindly, though more brusquely than before. "We must go to our cypress and tell all our friends there that they will have to move and find new homes in the woods near by — they'll have no bother, never fear, for they have nearly four weeks in which to leave the tree and build new nests and burrows."

The boy's face lightened somewhat at his grandfather's last remarks; but he was silent, and a little distraught and thoughtful as the two of them made their way towards the back door of the shop.

"And tomorrow, Simon," said the old man, pausing in the doorway, "we will go and hear Jesus of Nazareth speak to the people hereabouts. He will be passing this way in the morning, and will preach to all who wish to hear Him on a hill a mile or so from here."

"Grandfather, I must ask you some questions!" burst out Simon, worried and puzzled.

For a moment there was silence; then Joseph,

nervously and with some reluctance, nodded and smiled his assent.

"Who is Jesus of Nazareth? Did the angel tell you about Him?" asked Simon anxiously. "And this cross you have to make — surely such a thing is meant as a torture to kill people slowly? Why would God ever want you to make such an object? Please, I must know, tell me if you can," he pleaded.

The old man's face fell as his grandson was speaking, and for a brief moment a look of terrible pain stamped itself upon his features; a look which he managed to disguise quickly and hide from the child who, fortunately, at that moment was gazing abstractedly into middle space while holding his grandfather's hand.

"Your first question is easy to answer, though I had not intended telling you until you had seen and heard Him for yourself. Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah and the Son of God — the angel told me this, and also that he would be near here tomorrow. But the cross I have to make! This is far more difficult to explain, my Simon, and again I had no wish to tell you anything until you had seen Jesus and heard Him speak. However, since this question has arisen in your mind, and as you ask, I must tell you something of what I know and feel."

By now Joseph's face was sunken and ashen, and it was plain enough to me that what he had been cornered into saying was causing him the most dreadful torture; although I could not decide whether his sufferings were purely on the boy's behalf, or also for what he saw of that which was to come. Luckily, however, the lintel over the door shaded his head and shoulders in sharp contrast to the strong sunlight, so

that the boy was not properly aware of the old man's anguish — a state of mind that he further obscured with his steady, even voice.

"You are right, of course," went on Joseph after a short pause. "The cross is the most bestial and savage invention to torture and kill slowly. Nevertheless, whatever I know beyond what I have already said is still too vague and indefinite in my mind — I know that I know, but what I know is still largely hidden from me, so that I am haunted by fears and premonitions to which I can give no name, and hardly dare to think beyond what is clear at present. However, at least I am most deeply aware that God is closer to us now than He has been since the days of Adam; His power and love are tremendous and all about us. But I feel, too, the dark and terrible powers of Satan, active and gathering in our midst.

"Simon, we are now on the very brink of a cruel tragedy and a transcending majesty such as the World has never seen before; and also, in further paradox, this cross I have to make from our tree is to become — in some dark way which I fear — the central symbol of a new and wonderful road to God. To us here there is coming something both dreadful and glorious, though such words can never begin to express the vastness of what I sense and indefinably know."

Joseph stopped, almost abruptly, his heart wrenched in distress. "You are too young to have such thoughts weigh on your mind," he said at last, "although they are both heavy and light at the same time. This is why I wanted you to see Jesus of Nazareth before I told so much of what I know or see darkly."

But Simon, in fact, was calmer and more relieved than he had been earlier, and squeezed his

grandfather's hand, replying, "You should know me better; young I am, but I like to know what I have to face better than to meet it in the dark. I can't read behind all of what you say, but I can see — in some way or other — that God is coming down to Earth to make things better for those who love Him. But what will happen to most of our people? I don't think they will want any change."

"Oh, Simon!" exclaimed Joseph, and then fell silent, quite overcome from relief and the depth of his emotions, while the colour flooded back into his face and tears suffused his eyes. "I am very fortunate in you, very fortunate indeed," was all he could hesitatingly say before bending and kissing the boy warmly on the cheek.

For a moment the two of them looked at each other, the old and the very young, and I could see that their strong attachment had within it a curious affinity, reaching far beyond the normal bounds of any close relationship. I saw, too, that both of them now realized this more clearly than they had known it before — though neither spoke of it.

Instead Joseph went on to answer the boy's question as far as he was able. "For generations our people have been taught to expect God to come some day in power and glory, to release us from our bondage and raise us up as kings of the World. But, Simon, the Jewish people have long since abdicated any claim they had to the covenant made by Abraham, the father of our race; for we have only observed the physical signs, and we have not sought to read or live their deeper meanings.

"In the final analysis we trust only in ourselves and not in God. For this reason I am sure we are doomed

to dissemination and partial destruction. Nevertheless, before this judgement is finally passed on us, we do have a last chance to accept Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God.

"Yes, I also fear for our people, Simon. They are too stiff-necked, and will never accept God in any form other than as an all-conquering king; and He will not appear like this, not this time."

Then my attention wavered, and I began to feel strangely light, airy, and tired too; so that I could no longer hold my body near the ground, but instead rose up and up, my sight growing dimmer as the scene I had been watching became blurred and vague before my eyes.

The last I saw — before oblivion overcame me — was the old man and the young boy emerging from the shop into the street, hand in hand and walking briskly. My thoughts became more and more detached, and it seemed as though a great weight was pressing on my consciousness. Feebly I struggled to remember, thrusting away the heaviness of sleep: something troubled me, the scene had not been quite complete, there was still some mystery which the old man had known clearly — but yet had not revealed to Simon.

I had grasped at it tenuously at the time, and then stupidly let it slip from me under the pursuance of their speech. But it was no good; for all I could dimly remember was a coming loss, a hidden tragedy personal to Joseph himself, one which had been a major cause of the terrible grief which had struck at him from time to time.

And then I drifted — lulled by the balance and peace of my state, lulled to sleep by the infallible

equation of Life, by its melodious beauty, and by the far-reaching poise and order of things to come.

* * * * *

Again I found myself wandering, light as thistledown; though wafted neither here nor there by the strong gusts of wind, but rather drawn on and up a hill on which there were thousands and thousands of people; drawn by a strange magnetic power, a wonderful power, so that my feet sped faster and faster up the long gradient, the crowd drawing closer, and the long afternoon sun casting deep shadows that left an indelible impression of a country torn and savaged by weather, a country of ochre and mauve — though these thoughts scarcely touched my conscious mind at the time, my sole purpose being to press on and up the hill.

Soon I began to pass through the fringes of the crowd and slowed my haste, although I knew not why, for neither people nor things were any obstruction to me. But I felt that I must, and so began to pick up the myriad thoughts and words about me.

However, beyond the stretch of people's minds, their thoughts that filled the ether, there lay a heavy atmosphere of tragedy in the air. The people themselves were mostly disunited and contentious, disputing over this and that, and not knowing which way to turn or think. This was a rude and unpleasant shock, for I knew that Jesus stood on the hill above me, drawing these lost sheep of Israel to Him in spite of their silly, empty selves.

And then, as I continued moving up the hill quite slowly, my mind was overtaken and besieged by a great weight of cutting thoughts and dark

impressions, shapes and spectres, their presence becoming more and more evident and vivid the further I climbed. Now I could not hurry, but bent low beneath their burden, for they were mostly evil or weak, and willed myself on through their dreadful turbulence, still drawn by the light ahead to give me strength and purpose.

In my pain I hardly knew them apart, and in my sensitivity I squirmed like a worm and shuddered under their mental blows and pricks. But still some knowledge seared through to me, and thus I knew that I was fighting up a hill outside Bethphage in the month of February, and in the year A.D. 30.

Gradually I drew closer to Jesus, His beam of light a lifeline to my staggering, faltering steps, and a strong hold on my battered and buffeted self as I strove up and up. Soon I became tired, and then wellnigh exhausted, and the thought rose in my mind to stop, to lie down and rest and evade their blows as best I might, or even to allow myself to be swept down and away by the almost overwhelming powers of darkness about me, far away until at last they turned back to vent their hate on Jesus and His band of faithful followers.

But I went on, and as I drew nearer my heart lifted; for the flight of evil creatures, and others that flopped and dragged, were turning aside from me. Still they were everywhere, their stink and noxious filth catching in my nostrils; but now they flew and whirled, slithered and spat, in a frenzy of hate against a great wall of light — a wall through which I passed slowly and wearily, a wall of cleansing purity that washed me of their evil fumes and left me worn, but clean.

Now light surrounded me, springing and flowing

from the central source of Jesus, only some few paces ahead. Nevertheless, for a while I feared to lift my eyes while still torn and saturated with the pain and wounds of my fight; so stood still in the gentle effulgence, allowing the warm, healing rays to soak deeply into me, their strength to fill me through and through.

Then, slowly and slightly apprehensively, I lifted my head, dimly aware of people to my right and left — their thoughts pure, ingenuous and in harmony; although many were slightly puzzled and spiritually inutile, uplifted and fed only for the time in hand.

And then I looked into the face of Jesus, and beheld that which is above and beyond all description in truth. Physically He was tall and well proportioned, His hair a rich brown, long and curling, His stance in perfect poise, relaxed, and yet dynamic and magnificent.

However, beyond this I cannot properly describe Jesus in earthly terms — for He was incarnate, although clad in perfect bodily form; His covering was a sheath, almost a borrowed garment to be discarded later as unworthy of its owner. Yet, at the same time, the sheath itself was so infused with brilliance that it seemed to bear with it a secondary light of its own . . . I saw here, in this paradox of states, of levels, that the infinite may step down to the finite, imbuing within the finite the qualities of divinity; thus revealing in a single gesture the unity of spirit, mind and matter when carried to perfection.

Essentially beauty and strength — indeed any virtue — must flow from within; for if they are to be external only, then their life is brief and shallow, while they carry with them the visible and perishable seeds of

decay and corruption; seeds which even in their first flush of youth, and at their best, can never display more than a temporal skin, a skin without depth or any more than pagan life.

But Jesus can never be judged or held up to any standards that we know, however fine; for His physical self was wholly outshone, even eclipsed, by the infinite purity of His divinity. In Him dwelt all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and the fullness of Godhead in bodily form. For a moment only I looked on the Earthly face of God, then reeled and fell to the ground.

I nearly lost my senses, but was saved by the very power which emanated so strongly from Jesus. I looked up again, but this time could only see the perfect man, His divinity shielded. I saw, too, that He was deeply sad and outworn, though His powers were in no way diminished; for His far-sighted sense of fatality, His pre-knowledge of His final gory submission and task that loomed so close ahead, combined with the apparent failure of His mission, the almost hopeless lack of insight and understanding in those who flocked after Him, all together weighed heavily upon His soul.

Not even those who loved and clung to Jesus could grasp at the fullness of His destiny and death on Earth; and few were yet to understand in depth the truth in love and the purpose of His divinely appointed work, climaxing in less than two months from that day on the hill near Bethphage.

As I gazed on Jesus, and listened to Him speak in words of fire to the crowd gathered before Him, I became more and more aware of His truly giant stature, of His vast divine love that would suffer to the

ultimate extremity for the sake of mankind, and of the awful loneliness which of late had beset Him so closely while in His human state — a loneliness that sometimes bordered nearly to despair; for He spoke to people who chose to be blind, who heard but shut their ears, who received His gifts but who rejected His kingdom and love and freedom in spirit.

So many had been blessed by His presence, by the divine wisdom and power of His teaching, or by the miracle of His healing touch. Yet there stood about Him now less than twenty people — a dozen or so men and some women — who could be considered wholly loyal to His cause, who were filled with the seeds of lasting grace, and who loved Him heart and soul.

Nearly all were drawn to Jesus while in His presence, for His magnetism was tremendous; but later — when the way He led became rougher and more barren — most people fell away, for they were too uncertain and too weak to walk with Him by the path He showed, or to stand upright in spiritual seclusion from the taunts and slings of the World while not leaning on the law for support. Furthermore, this failing in them found excuse from Jesus' attack on the Scribes and Pharisees who, hated though they were for their pompous and hypocritical ways, had at least a strongly binding authority from ingrained habit and their long years of temporal rule.

And then there were the words that Jesus spoke with such intensity and force, words of Life and Truth, and bolder and clearer in meaning than any He had uttered in public in Galilee. These words proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God; as they were also an offered reconciliation to breach the growing chasm between God and Man — its medium the blood of the Cross,

its dynamic the suffering and death of Jesus Himself. The people could not understand; but still, like winged arrows, His words sped into the hearts of His Jewish listeners; verbal arrows they could never forget, arrows which — more often than not — would rankle in their hereditary resistance, stirring and bringing to the surface the poison that had lain within, to later fester and bubble in unreasoning hate.

Jesus stopped speaking and, for a short space, stood alone, His mind recessed and gathering strength, while His disciples organized the growing line of sick and crippled people who came to seek His help. Then some children — amongst whom I recognized young Simon, the old man's grandson — ran towards Jesus and quite fearlessly tugged at His robe to draw attention to themselves. In a very short while there appeared several more about Him, and also some mothers with their babies pressing forward to have their children touched and blessed.

Temporarily the subterranean atmosphere of contention and dispute lightened as Jesus bent to welcome His small friends. But Peter and the other disciples noticed only that their Master apparently was being pestered, so hastened from the queue of sick people to drive away the children. However, Jesus, seeing their intention, rebuked them firmly, saying, "Let them be, do not keep them back from me; the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

Then Jesus turned to the people and raised His arms, while the fiends from Hell raged about Him, darkening and blinding the minds of many in the crowd, and lifted His voice and spoke on. "Believe me, the man who does not accept the kingdom of God like a little child, will never enter into it."

It was a deeply impressive and beautiful scene and one which will always remain vivid in my memory — the children clustered around Jesus, the blond head of Simon in their midst, and Jesus' thrilling voice which carried with it both a blessing in simplicity and a deep warning. Why, even the people's doubts were forgotten for the moment, the hard heart of the crowd touched, as they leant forward as one to catch a view of this extraordinary teacher and prophet who apparently counted the ways of children, their innocence, as being of more importance than the cluttered wisdom and devious thoughts of the adults; men learned in their own intricate self-conception of God, and the rites that they thought necessary to preserve them alone as the chosen race.

Truly it was only their type of knowledge that blinded them to the truth, being not the knowledge of the spirit, but rather the knowledge of inheritance and convenience piled one upon another, unwieldy and complex and filled with heresies.

The scene began to fade from me as I was drawn away, but still the memory of Jesus' words — all that I had heard from Him that afternoon — incised deeply into my mind, ringing through me with such clarity and beauty as I can never fully express.

But greater than His words, divinely spoken though they were, there remained the impact of Jesus Himself. My heart swelled within me, swelled with such a tremendous love for Him so that, in some strange way, I felt a living part of all eternity; neither transient nor intransient, but a being of many sides, yet whole and complete in Him, in Christ my Lord and Master.

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From a state of rest I emerged to feel and hear a terrible rending and tearing, a savage inner murder that hurled me spinning helplessly through space and time, past galaxies and planets that turned and moved on in their inexorable paths, through a space so vast and limitless that my soul cried out in horror — and then withered and shrank within me, through a silence so complete and awful that there remained only death and fear; a fear that nothing could lift or alleviate, even to the slightest degree.

For I drifted in utter loneliness, cut off from all life, cut off from God, nothing in nothingness; so that even my cramping fear was quickly shrivelled and flat, crushed by the manifestation of creation, the creation of celestial bodies without Life.

Nowhere was there soul, nowhere was there light — only the majesty of power swinging on its eternal way, the Universe dormant in growth, yet moving soundlessly through black eternal space. Nothing else in all creation existed, for God had not yet breathed His spirit into matter.

How can I better describe the void in which I drifted, this far corner of Limbo? My presence all alone; created once, but now cast back into the abyss, an abyss so empty and terrible that it had not even time as its comforter. Neither before nor since have I suffered so deeply, my mind and soul tortured and squeezed upon themselves until empty of nearly all but a distant longing; lacking feeling yet knowing the memory of touch, lacking mind yet with remembrance of thought and my source.

But no words, however finely phrased, can put full meaning into what I experienced; for, paradoxically, there is no meaning in nothing, and a void holds only

emptiness.

Then a slow rending sound began to claw at my dulled senses, growing stronger until it became so awful that I shrank still further within myself — its torture acute even in my semi-anaesthetized state.

The jagged sound swelled and increased in tempo, greater and faster, so that it tore and ripped at the very veils of Life. And then, quite suddenly, there was a dreadful crash, splintering, battering and jarring me through and through; a crash that shook the void to its illimitable reaches, tearing away the built-up barriers between God and Man, and bringing with it Life — dim and distant, crude and indistinct, but none the less Life.

I grasped at it, humble and simple though it was, and drank and drank until my soul filled and my spirit swelled about me. Once again I looked out on the great celestial orbs as they span upon their eternal way; but now I looked with eyes bright with Life, so was no longer crushed by their power or the limitless expanse through which they rolled; for they were dead, playthings of the Eternal, puppets and slaves to the will of Man, mediums only for the growth and refinement and carriage of life in progression.

My lesson deeply learned, I felt myself being drawn towards the light, and then dazzled and blinded as I passed through layer after layer of ethereal substance, each one, as I descended, more substantial and denser than the last; until finally I saw before me the clearing on which had stood the magnificent cypress, the Tree of Life; only now it was fallen and partially smashed.

I sank down lower and lower until my feet just touched the ground beside Simon, the child, who stood watching his grandfather and two other men

start work on the fallen giant. The men were silent as they bent themselves to the huge task of cutting up the great tree, their faces solemn yet seemingly undismayed at the cruel work their axes had done. Simon, too, was sad, though not in any way broken-hearted. All of them, the three men and the child, were so clearly filled with that spirit which I knew so well, that strange and wonderful sense of belonging which Jesus infuses into His true followers.

I watched all that day as they toiled, for it had been early morning when I had arrived in the glade. I watched and grew more conscious of my timeless state as they sweated through the heat and the long hours, for I felt neither the passing hours nor the burden of a body in physical shape. Instead, as in a dream — or, perhaps, reality — the long day was condensed into a single fleeting moment, and the fleeting moment into nothing which could be measured in terms of time.

Yet all I saw, I saw more fully and clearly than ever it would have been possible had I been in my body; the tirelessness of my more ethereal form giving me a sharper perception from a higher level, so that impressions sank deeper and were more vivid, while my extra-sensory abilities increased to allow me to equate more easily what lay before with what lay beyond.

All this, and more, were my gifts from God, to see and observe, thus enabling me to record later in the clumsy language we know and use.

For some hours I watched Simon help with the lighter work, though later he grew tired and slept through the heat of the day, curled up like a dog in the shadow of the tree's enormous stump. I watched as a strange man strode into the glade, and as Joseph

tiredly straightened his back, dug in his pocket for the purse holding the twenty pieces of silver, and handed both over to the owner of the tree, who then left by the same path by which he had come.

I watched also, with fascination and awe, the hundreds of small animals and birds which encircled the glade or sat in the branches of all the near-by trees. They looked on in anxious silence, and except for the occasional rustle from the undergrowth, or the flutter of wings, there was little sound from any of them. It seemed to me that they were linked in spirit to the Eternal, and that they, too, sensed something of the coming tragedy, if not of the following glory.

For three days I watched the three men work, and for three days the animals and birds watched with me, leaving only when they had to feed during the day or to sleep in their homes in the still of the nights; and those three days were strangely oppressive and windless, while the atmosphere — though it affected me only in the subtlety of spirit — was heavy and foreboding.

But at last in the late afternoon of the third day the task was finished, and all that remained of the great cypress was a very roughly-hewn upright of some fifteen feet in length taken from the main trunk of the tree, and a smaller and shorter cross-piece taken from the lowest branch. All the rest had been cut into manageable sizes and stacked around and on the giant stump; all save for one small seed-cone — the very best that could be found — which lay snugly in Joseph's inner pocket.

The three men and the child looked at each other, and all of them were very tired; for their labour had been tremendous, being such that only men driven on by some deep inner purpose could possibly have

accomplished in the short time allowed by the angel.

The two men nodded to Joseph, and then stepped back a few paces. For a while Joseph's eyes lingered over Simon; he smiled gently, but his smile was only a ripple on the surface of his shielded thoughts, betraying nothing to the weary boy.

Then Joseph slowly drew two flints from his pocket and, bending down, gathered together a small pile of dried grass. With flints and breath and age-old skill it was not long before he had generated a small, bright flame which, carefully nursed, was soon hot enough to transfer to a faggot bound with grass.

With this flaming brand Joseph went around the huge pile of cut and broken timber, lighting stack after stack of dried grass and brushwood which Simon had placed in ample quantities under the decimated remains of the old cypress tree.

Gradually the flames took a firm hold, and the fire rapidly ate its way into the middle of the heaped pile by way of carefully prepared lines of combustible materials, all laid by Simon as the men had placed one chunk of timber or branch after another. There was no doubting their skill in the laying of this immense pyre, for the air rushed in after the fire, and the hot flames soon began to lick their curling red lines upwards.

Within half an hour, and with the evening drawing on, there remained nothing else for them to do; so they prepared to turn for home, while the sky grew darker and the glade more brightly lit from the fire. Suddenly the flames flared up for no apparent reason, and lights and shadows were cast against the surrounding trees in lurid patterns, throwing weird and ghastly shapes that seemed to come and go and move in evil pace.

For a while the three men and Simon stood and watched in growing horror, fear stamped upon their features, while even I felt the cold hand of dread clutch at my heart; for here and there, everywhere about us, were the spectral shapes of the malignant dead, lit up and moving in the fantasy of fire.

My earthly companions were horror-stricken, and I also felt the clammy fingers of foul shapes that dwelt below my grasp; shapes which existed as realities in the regions of Hell, but whose thoughts seeped through to reflect in the almost tangible mirror of their actions.

For a space we fought together against the cold breath of Hell — the two men ashen-faced and frozen into immobility, Simon clasped firmly against Joseph's side — while all the time the cold tendrils of evil beings stroked and enticed us, whispering profanities and heresies in soft alluring tones, seeking with all their craft and guile to woo us away from the fire and towards the darkening woods.

None of the four stirred from where they stood, although I could both feel and see the hypnotic strength of these powers of darkness dragging their toll on every one of them, even on myself.

But the horror could not last, for the victims of this onslaught were only human; while even I, transient though I was and possibly better equipped to resist their pull, could feel the savage potency and force behind these minions from Hell.

The air above us stirred, was still a moment, then gathered together and rushed mightily down upon the glade from the sky above; a vertical wind of tremendous strength, and the first movement of air that we had felt for three full days.

It blew so strongly that the great column of smoke rising from the fire was damped and flattened, and spread along the ground in all directions, reaching between the trees and deep into the surrounding woods, completely smothering the shadows which had formally haunted, leered and danced to bloody tunes — no less potent for their whispered silence.

Soon the wind ceased, and again the smoke from the fire began to rise in a single giant column, steady and dense; while the wisps on the ground fluffed and drifted away, leaving the air clean once more and free from any taint of noxious breaths.

Shaken and staggering slightly, Joseph and one of the men lifted the upright, leaving the third man to raise the cross-piece to his shoulder. Taking Simon's hand, Joseph then led his party away from the glade, through the trees and past the homes of so many of their little animal and feathered friends, towards their village not so far away.

I followed, for even though I was awry with time, yet I feared to be alone on this darkening night, prey to the terror which had been swept away by the billowing clouds of smoke. I followed for fear of what might follow later as the smoke blew upwards during the long hours of darkness which lay ahead. I followed for I was pursued by the fearfulness of the deed — preordained and destined though it was. I followed, for the change in Life — the will of God through the Son of Man — was too great for me to stand alone, notwithstanding that I lived normally in time nearly two thousand years after these events. I followed in dire dread of the titanic clash between good and evil which I had seen all about me on this evening, and earlier on the hill with Jesus; a clash which I could

sense everywhere, drawing closer and more intense as each day fatefully passed.

My spirit was willing enough, but the forces abroad were over-powering and terrifying; be they past or present — or merely lurking warily, temporarily crushed in opposition — they were altogether too powerful for me to cope.

Perhaps I played the coward's part in thus fleeing the scene with my earthly comrades? though they knew me not as one of them. Perhaps? But who would not have done the same as I after having fought with demons on the hill outside Bethphage? Though there at least I had a goal in mind to reach my Christ. Who would not be bled white and shaken to the core having drifted a space in the furthest regions of Limbo, beyond even the beginning of time, before the creation of Man or even Life in its cruder forms? And now the glade and the fall of the Tree of Life and Knowledge, the passing scene, the moving on, the birthpangs of an emergent Light springing from the fallen seed of the old, but pursued and harried by devils in evil and seductive shapes, their temptations subtle and slyly suited to fit the forms of their intentions. I tell you, friends, my soul was sorely smitten and, for a while, unhinged and filled with fear. I knew the past, I knew the future, and now I was being ground between the millstones of the two.

But even this was not all; for I was thoughtful and learned, and had judged the time to come beyond my present life: the time of the reaper, the sickle, the wheat and the tares, the day that lay so close ahead to me in time-gripped years; all this, too, I felt — its ennui and slow corruption, its falling-away from the source of Light, its self-dependence, malignancy,

greed and range of doubled standards, its convenience to the wish in hand, and its heresies and alignment to the darkness that shrouded its thoughts and deeds. Oh, how pitiful the gross madness of the World, a World that needs but does not want.

The good that lived was nearly crushed, sparkling bright only rarely here and there; flickering to keep the World from total darkness, but blown and dimmed in the desert of Man's material thoughts and deeds.

Yes, I feared; not for the ultimate outcome, but rather that my faith and borrowed strength would be insufficient to the cause I knew and loved, would be too small to withstand and overcome the gale of darkness thrown into the battle by Lucifer, all the strength that he could pitch against the emerging Son of Man.

Yes, I was afraid and fled; yet in fleeing I saw something of the magnificent strength in Jesus, this divine man of peace who was so shortly to bear the full brunt of Hell enraged; to bear and overcome as a man, to conquer and crush while estranged from the infinite power He might not use. I fled, but as I fled I marvelled and, strangely perhaps, determined not to flee again when next assailed.

Joseph and his companions walked on through the woods in silence, their thoughts their own to keep, but I could sense their strength from the firmness in their strides and from the rising emanations of their thoughts. They had each other so that, shaken though they were, bowed and bent from what they had seen and experienced, they had still the hard knot of fellowship to bind and sustain their minds.

I realized then that I had underestimated their

strength and shields, as I had also overweighed mine own; for they had not only the shelter of each other, but also a natural barrier in the limits of their three-dimensional states, while I — who drifted alone in a higher ether — was more vulnerable to creatures who could pass the barriers of time, could more clearly read their sick thoughts and fancies, could feel more cruelly their stings and barbs.

Nevertheless I felt ashamed, for I had also seen the living Christ, had been able to perceive more than those with whom He walked and talked; there were fewer riddles to my clearer sight, less impediments to my reaching closer, and therefore more potential to my strength and armour. So I sank within myself — and sank into the enfolding embrace of Christ, His giant spirit catching me up and comforting the weariness and poverty of my wretched soul.

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For some days I wandered as in a quilted cloud, resting and shielded, defended and insulated from the sharp bite in all I saw. I watched and observed, but no longer was I a living, feeling part of the times in which I moved, no longer did I share in their pains and ecstasies — although I missed nothing that passed before my sight.

Again, while I drifted about the house of Joseph like a puff of light-blown cloud, time was a dimension of no account; day followed night, and night day, and I watched and saw all that passed.

I needed this rest for I had been torn and smitten, first one way and then another, until my strength had been broken and my balance and poise cast all awry.

Yet somehow I knew within me that this space was only a lull before the final testing storm, that I was to play an unseen part in the most vivid and terrible drama this World has ever supported. I knew this, but for the while sheltered in the lee of God's mantle cast about my shoulders.

The next morning, while hanging lazily in the air as if the past had never been and the future was of no account, I watched as Joseph carved and fashioned the two parts to the Cross, his big, skilful hands working the crude tools to wonderful effect.

He could have worked faster, have completed the task in half the time: but this was a labour of love, and as Joseph worked his sensitive hands often ran affectionately over the wood, almost caressing the fine grain, pouring all his heart and skill into what remained of the great cypress that slowly seasoned and reddened under his touch. Sometimes he stopped to look reflectively at his work, and as he did so I noticed that he was more stooped and weary, and appeared older than he had only the day before; none the less, his face, though deeply lined, was firm and gentle, while his eyes, though steady and deep, were occasionally bright with unshed tears.

Joseph was a man working without while living deeply within; a man whose whole heart and mind were set and dedicated to a deeply-driven task, a task which inspired, but also dragged him down; a task of loveliness and perfection, but also intertwined and redolent with a savage cruelty fit only for the lowest.

By mid-morning the upright was complete, and long before the sun had set the cross-piece, too, was finished. So perfect was the work that when Joseph finally fitted the two parts together, they sank into

each other almost as if the wood had grown that way, its only disturbance being in the opposite flow of the grains.

During the morning Joseph was left to work alone, not even a single person called into his shop; although outside in the dusty roadway I sometimes observed groups of people talking, nodding and shaking their heads as they walked by; but I also noticed that none passed the open door, choosing rather to go out of their way and take the path on the far side of the street.

Shortly after midday Simon came into the shop, his hair wild and with cuts and bruises on his face and arms; while some twenty yards behind him stood a pack of angry young boys, not daring to come closer, but jeering and mocking for some minutes before they eventually drifted off.

Silently Joseph held out his arms to the boy, who promptly ran into them, weeping bitterly. In a short time Simon was comforted, his sobs lessening under the influence of his grandfather's calm strength.

Then the old man gently pushed him away, his hands resting on the lad's slim shoulders, and said, "Simon, we cannot work for both God and Man; not any more, since most of our people have estranged themselves and made us their enemies. But come, you can carve animals most beautifully in wood, why don't you do some of our woodland friends around the foot of the Cross? Jesus would only bless you for the deed. But first go and wash and bathe your cuts."

Simon's face lit up, and he smiled at the old man, the warmest and most lovely smile that I have ever seen from any child; then he reached up and put his two arms round Joseph's neck, drawing him down

until he could quickly kiss the weathered cheek.

Joseph was hard-driven not to weep for love of the boy, but managed to say, while running one slightly trembling hand through the lad's fair hair, "You mustn't go to school here any more, Simon; I cannot bear it, and it can do no good. In a little while we will leave this village and move to another part of the country; meanwhile you can help me here, I have plenty of work that you could do. Now run along and clean yourself up," he concluded, giving the boy a firm push towards the back door and the yard.

Simon did as he was bid; but I saw in both their eyes a mutual recognition of truth, an acceptance of unknown burdens to come, and a knowledge that their lives together could never be the same again. A sword had been drawn, and both the young and the old were committed to standing behind the cutting edge.

Simon was quite remarkably adept at carving small figures, and before the afternoon had merged into the early hours of evening he had completed four beautiful silhouettes on the base of the upright, one on each of the four smoothed faces of the wood: a rabbit, an owl, a badger and a robin. Each was distinctive and quite unmistakable, and this in spite of the total lack of any colouring; also each bird and animal was looking up the stem of the Cross in an attitude of complete trust, and in what I can only describe as winsome wonder.

The figures were small and lightly carved from this young artist's deft fingers, simply engraved, and with no more in them than essential lines. No line was lost, each one contributed in a subtle way to the predominant trust and wonder which seemed to flow from the figures and reach up the stem of the Cross.

However, at the same time, being small and only

lightly indented, they could not be easily noticed, and were still further hidden as the freshly-cut grooves quite quickly lost their pallor and assumed the dull red of the rest of the Cross.

None the less, whether seen or not before the base of the Cross came to rest finally in the ground at Calvary, the carvings were a beautiful thought, and also symbolic in that God's creatures were not forgotten in the coming cataclysm.

As the sky began to turn red and the evening drew on, Joseph closed and bolted the outer doors to his workshop before going with Simon into a room at the back to prepare their evening meal. They talked for some time after they had cleared away their platters, but eventually, with the moon riding high in the heavens, climbed the rough stairs to bed and sleep, leaving the workshop quiet and dark.

I hung lazily in the air, the darkness no impediment to my sight, soaking up the atmosphere which was already rising strongly from the two newly-carved pieces of the Cross — though they had yet to be made one and consecrated in the blood of the Crucifixion. I stayed so throughout the whole night, reluctant to move from where I was or before I must.

But at length I was stirred by the early rays of the rising sun as they winged their golden shafts through some cracks in the double doors, falling first on the wall, and then a little later on to the timbers of the Cross.

I looked and wondered; for during the night the Cross had matured to a richer and darker red and, with the first fall of sunlight on its wood, glowed and shone so that the whole workshop was lit in a rosy and ever-brightening effulgence. The effect was dramatic,

and so powerful that I could easily imagine the dead wood itself being imbued with a pulsing life-blood of its own; its curling, wavy grains only deepening the impression of compressed and vivid Life.

I gazed, fascinated, and as I looked the insulating shields about me fell away. Now, once again, I felt and saw and thought without hindrance; once again I was sensitized and lived alive to every thought and fancy which crossed my path.

I thrilled and spun about the room in wild delight — though my passing did not stir a single atom of dust. Then I slowed, for I grew aware that my powers were greatly enhanced, that I was more complete in myself than ever before. Bright thoughts pulsed and radiated from my mind, and my waves rose, touched, and then encompassed the brilliant vibrations of pure genius. My thoughts were translucent and searing in their clarity and sharpness, and my soul was white and clean as snow — I was master of myself, master of . . .

I stopped, my sight drawn magnetically to the separate timbers of the Cross.

My transcendent state was in no way diminished; but I was humbled, for in that moment I realized the fallaciousness in the worship of power in any shape or in any person. God only was the true source of all Life and sustenance, and of any being or form of created work — and this in a finer and more far-reaching sense than I had understood before. Even the Devil lived on borrowed power, and could be cut back in a moment if our actions were suddenly, and involuntarily, in complete accordance with God's perfect will.

So I saw clearly that the surge of Life within me was His and while, perhaps, I had done something to earn this enlightened state, yet these powers were not mine

for the raising of myself alone, but in fact conferred upon me a great burden of responsibility for some special tasks destined to fall on my shoulders.

On an impulse I knelt and kissed the foot of the upright, at the same time praying that I might be given grace to use my special powers in accordance with His will, and also that I might never again flee the field, but contain my courage and face my foes — His foes.

Then I drifted upwards and thought more about this revelation, this truth that has become a nearly empty truism in the World of today, yet which only very few people can understand properly in depth. My mind's lightning speed and grasp was dazzling, but even so I very soon found myself up against an elevation of ideas which I could not surmount, and could only partially understand.

To attempt to record what I grasped — or to indicate what lay so tantalizingly just beyond my full sight — in any mundane language of the World, and with the limited vision normally granted to Man on Earth, is, I dare to say, an impossibility; for our spectrum here is very much narrower and smaller than the vast depths and breadths which we increasingly encounter when lifted to higher dimensions, to higher planes of vibration.

The best that we can see — through the eyes of the World — is only a very dim reflection of reality; a reality that is so blinding, so pure in essence, so powerful, so vibrant with infinite knowledge, and yet so loving and patient, that were we to meet it face to face, we would be burnt up in a flash, our ignoble selves and coarseness unable to exist in the searing light of Truth.

Truly, our purpose should be to conquer our base natures and rise but it is an ironic fact that we are fortunate — or unfortunate, depending on how we view it — in having the climate in which to sink; for it is the sweetly innocent, lower vibrations of created nature on Earth, aided, abetted, distorted and furthered by the baseness in Man, which act temporarily as our shields, filtering and diluting the pure rays of Life to such an extent that truth has been easily warped and distorted to suit the meanness in Man, his ulterior motives, and his natural greed and debased thoughts.

Behind this largely self-created shield we are maladjusted to a pressure in living which can only increase the deeper we sink, and the further we drift from our source, until at last — like crushed and self-ignited atoms — we reach a point where Life no longer exists and where, having destroyed all else, and only knowing the tool of destruction, we destroy ourselves, never to live again.

You might think that God has a wry sense of humour to thus create a situation in which we may more easily sink than rise. But think beyond the immediately obvious — as I did — and bear with me awhile, for you will surely see that such a climate of environment is needful to eventually sort the fully ripened wheat from the wind-blown chaff.

I thought on these things, and the weight of them pulled at me so that I sank to the floor in the midst of the wood dust and chippings from the Cross.

Then I was led to think back to the symbol of Adam and Eve — though now my thoughts were inclined to be sluggish and earth-bound. I thought on the fruit of the Tree of Life and Knowledge, the banned fruit, the

fruit that the serpent had led Eve to eat. I thought on knowledge itself, and saw why it was that Man, born of God, of free will, but innocent in duplicity, had been forbidden this tempting bait. I thought, and then saw clearly that Man, created perfect by God, was yet little more than a weak and watery reflection of God Himself; a creature pure, but useless in defence; a poor thing who did not know the many spectrums of Life, who could not cope with adversity; a companion only in name, but not in spirit — for Man had not tasted of Life in its fullness, had not eaten the fruit of the Tree of Life and Knowledge, and knew nothing beyond himself and his Creator.

I saw that the fruit of knowledge was not in itself evil, but rather, in its eating, that weak and inexperienced Man fell further from God; for Man had discovered that which he could not understand, but could use; Man found power, but had not the wisdom to wield it well; Man was free from the silken bonds of purity, yet at first had neither the will nor the strength within himself to seek and ascend to that which he had lost. Man was free to live as he wished, free to struggle through his natural self and regain his eminence, free to create or to destroy within the bounds of his fallen state, and free to rise or sink according to the wish and courage within himself.

In sorrow — throughout the ages — I watched Man slide away from God. I saw him grow as cunning and worldly-wise as the serpent, and create evil from the breath of his own lusts and many-sided greeds. I saw his mind shrink as his link with his Creator faded and grew more distant; and I saw, too, how and why the Ten Commandments were introduced — naught but a simple ladder on which to climb the first steps.

But, above all, I saw the distortion of even simple truths to suit the self-made needs of Man with increasing power to wield; and all the time I sensed the barrier becoming deeper and denser as Man retrogressed more and more rapidly, his link with God more slender and tenuous as each year passed.

I thought on, my mind lifting so that I could reach deeply into the heart of Life, and saw that all had been planned and formed before the beginning of time; and that to become the true image and likeness of God, Man had first to taste the fruits of Life with all its sweetness and bitterness, had to experience all forms of creation from the lowest to the highest, had to learn to conquer himself in the face of adversity, and to reject and overcome the wiles and temptations made and put up by his fellow Man.

All this Man had to do in an increasing oneness with the spirit of God, until finally he could declare himself master of the Tree of Life and Knowledge, by forever raising his spirit above the level of the dust in which he was born, and by attuning himself to the infinite mind of God: rising at last beyond the drag and call of the clamorous World; a man of the World, yet reborn in spirit; a man imprudent in the ways of the World and rejected by those on the road to perdition; a man of spiritual wisdom who, through the eyes of truth and reality, could scrutinize all and not be subject to the Earth and its ways.

My mind sped on and reeled from far more than I, with the poor words I have to command, am able to express in fullness; for I saw that a deep shroud had gradually accumulated around the Earth, thick and murky in some parts, and thin in others, while Man beneath had generally become futile and empty, living

and thinking only within the decreasing bounds of his self-created barriers.

Then I saw the Heavens open, and the Son of Man, in a shaft of light, lance through the heavy barrier of evil and mundane thoughts. But the clouds behind him closed and, although flashes of light sparkled and sprang from the World below, I could see no more — so that my thoughts dropped back from a shield I could not pierce.

I rose from the floor and drifted about the room to the sounds of movement from Joseph and Simon as they got up and prepared for the dawning day. I looked down at the great Cross, and I knew — knew beyond any doubt — that my task would be a great one, and that all my faith and strength would be needed to their uttermost limit. But I was firm in myself, and knew that no more would be called from me than I had to give. Furthermore, far and deep as my thoughts had flown, I knew that in time they would reach yet further: far into the future, into my own time and beyond; for Jesus had not yet risen from the dead, and Man had yet to be redeemed.

* * * * *

From this day, and from the time of my new awakening, the tempo of events seemed to catch me up more violently: by false lull and deceptive repose, by subtle and corrupt writhings and, from time to time, in mortal combat everywhere. The atmosphere was imbued — or so it appeared to me — with a climaxing urgency that carried with it a strong aura of fear for those at all involved. Event after event passed before my eyes, all fitting together perfectly like the

pieces in a jigsaw puzzle, no matter how rough-hewn or jagged their edges, and all tinged with the same pervading fear; until, at last, even I who had been well prepared for this most tremendous epoch in the history of Man, had to fight against the wish to run.

But behind this fear was a whole host of giant conflicting influences for good and ill — although the evil, as predestined, was fast predominating the scene. With my extra-sensory sight I saw an army of demons gathering for the final fray, and meanwhile blinding men's eyes with the dust of lies and filling their hearts with black, unreasoning hate; so that the weak and thoughtless majority, together with the evil and base, swung easily to their dark will, growing more and more like ravening wolves as these last days drew their deathly pall over the World. Even those who were strong and clean of heart, and who believed in Jesus, were sorely smitten with fear as the Son of Man appeared to decline, leaving them empty of hope and wandering spiritlessly in a World that had apparently gone quite mad.

Joseph and Simon, too, were increasingly touched by this fear as they drew closer to Jerusalem: but the old man was like a firmly-founded rock in strength; while Simon, although so young and largely upheld by his grandfather, loved deeply from his tender artist's heart.

After breaking their fast, Simon left their little cottage and walked away from the village to a field near by — the early morning crisp and dry, with just a hint of dew sparkling on the thin grass. Impelled, I followed, though I was keenly interested as well as being deeply involved in this drama of Life and Death.

Cropping the sparse herbage in the field were two

donkeys, a she-ass and her foal. Without difficulty Simon caught the mother, slipped a rope halter over her head, and led her to his grandfather's workshop, the foal trotting docilely behind.

On returning I saw that Joseph had ready a light cart in which he had loaded the two parts to the Cross. The older donkey was backed up between the shafts and harnessed, and a few minutes later they were ready to start.

Both of them climbed up on to the cart, and sat down on a plank nailed across the front. Then, with a low whistle and an encouraging cluck from Joseph, the she-ass trotted off at a smart pace down the long hill that led from their village towards Jerusalem, the foal alternately following behind or running alongside his mother; while the donkeys' hooves set up a pleasant rhythm with their partially muffled clops in the light, dew-dampened dust that lay over most of the hardened earth road.

I wandered over their heads for most of the journey, effortlessly adjusting my pace to suit their own. It was still early morning, and so early had Joseph and Simon risen, prepared themselves and left, that I doubted whether more than a handful of people had seen them take to the road; certainly none had paused any longer than to stare in mild curiosity. It would appear that the vindictiveness, shown to them both only the day before, had now drifted away in the mild north-east winds of the night; but I knew this was not so, and that the people hereabouts were like dried wood, needing little more than a devilish spark to set alight their strong, fiery natures in a spate of mob-madness.

It was a good eighteen miles from Ephraim to Jerusalem; a long step for them all, and with no village

in which to break their journey. Consequently, on reaching the bottom of the first hill, both Joseph and Simon dismounted, leading the donkey with a loop of cord thrown lightly round her neck, while the colt trotted about as he willed — though never straying far from his mother, as with steady pace they climbed and descended the ridge of hills which lay between their home and Jerusalem.

They plodded on, the sun rising higher in the sky, and the dust lifting lightly under their feet as the increasing heat sucked up the last drops of moisture from the night's dew.

Once only did they stop, and then in the dappled shade of a prickly thorn tree about six miles before Jerusalem. Here they watered and rested the two beasts for about half an hour, and also sat themselves down with their backs against the thin, knobbly trunk of the tree.

Even so, it was nearly midday when the tired and footsore quartet eventually climbed the last hill towards the gates of Jerusalem, picking their way through the thin crowds of people — the first of many to flock into the Holy City for the Passover.

Joseph knew Jerusalem fairly well, so was able to lead his small party through the Dolorous Gate to the city, and then — immediately to his left — to the Fortress of Antonia and the Roman Garrison, not much more than a stone's throw from the Gate and situated opposite the Temple. Here I rose higher into the air so that I might see something of what was going on both within and outside the Roman barracks, and also a little of the Temple.

I watched Joseph stop his donkey a few yards from the Fortress gate and then, leaving Simon to hold the

two beasts, approach the sentry on duty to explain his mission. I had no need to sink to the ground again to overhear what was being said, for their actions and expressions were clear enough as to what was passing between Joseph and the Romans.

Joseph explained to the sentry that he had made this *Crux Capitata* as a gift to the Roman Garrison. But, no, he would accept no money; it was simply a gift which he felt they would need at some time in the near future.

The soldier, a rough and simple fellow, was clearly very puzzled; not only at the nature of the gift, but also that a Jew could want no payment for it. He pushed up his helmet, scratched his sweaty head in the hot sun, and walked over to the cart to see for himself. 'Oh, yes, it was a very fine piece of work — even he could see that. But why would a Jew bring such an instrument of torture to the Roman Garrison, especially so since it could only really be used against one of his own people?' it being forbidden that any Roman — no matter how heinous his crime — should suffer and die in such an ignoble fashion. 'Then, again, the wood was cypress, expensive too! Why, normally it would have to be shipped to Joppa from either Tyre or Sidon where these trees grew naturally in some profusion. But a Jew, of all the races on Earth, bringing to them, their hated Roman masters, this *Crux Capitata* in such fine timber, and so smoothly worked? It was all very odd; and then, to cap it all, a Jew who wanted no money!'

The poor man was completely nonplussed, and went on scratching his rather dirty looking head, first on one side and then on the other until I thought he would surely lose his helmet in the struggle. I watched

it all with very mixed feelings, not untinged with some amusement; for had it not long been predestined that the Romans would accept the Cross, and with it some share of the blame? This was one situation at least where they would not be able to prove themselves masters of their actions.

I kept an eye on what was going on, although I was also interested in the layout and events taking place inside the Garrison walls. The whole range of buildings, surrounded by a heavy wall, covered a rectangular area of about three thousand square feet; it was masterful and impressive, but also sombre and grim, erected, as it had been, from dark, roughly-carved stone slabs.

I had read a lot about this Fortress of Antonia and, as I watched the martial activities going on behind the walls, I wondered at its underground pool and conduits, and the many cells and secret passages which honeycombed its foundations, extending even to the Temple about three hundred feet away

But then my attention was brought back to the scene immediately below me, for the soldier had eventually given up trying to sort out this inexplicable situation, and had called his non-commissioned officer. The proceedings were repeated in much the same fashion, and with the same questions sticking in the second Roman's gullet. The officer of the guard was called, but with no better results, except that by now a good deal of rough badinage was being thrown about at Joseph's expense.

I was beginning to wonder how all this would end when the Centurion of the day, having no doubt noticed the noise at the gate, came to see for himself. He was an ill-tempered man, lean, humourless and

dour, who very crisply sized up the situation as being too petty for argument, but which could be of some use to Rome. Ignoring the other and more subtle aspects, he abruptly ordered his officer of the guard to detail two men to lift the Cross from the cart, and then to take and store it in the Garrison against its possible requirement in the future.

This was done quickly and in silence, the soldiers obviously in some awe of this martinet of a Centurion, after which he turned to Joseph with a wooden face and a curt nod of dismissal, before swinging on his heel and marching smartly back into the Garrison and the many other duties which doubtless vied for his attention, little reckoning of the small — but critical — part that he had unwittingly played this day in the coming drama of the Passion.

Wearily Joseph and Simon turned away, leading their donkeys and the empty cart on past the Garrison. It did not appear as if they intended taking the road to Samaria, the route by which they had entered the city; and this did not surprise me since they were tired, and could hardly be anxious to make their way back over the eighteen miles to Ephraim on that same day. In fact I, too, was becoming weary and so, without making any effort to read their thoughts, I wondered whether they would rejoin the inflowing crowds, take a room in Jerusalem, and stay for the Passover and the tragic finale of the drama in which they had already played so large a part.

In fact I was only partially correct in my assumptions; for they followed the city wall round to the back of the Temple, bought some food at a stall, then turned left through the Golden Gate and made their way down to the Kidron Valley and the road to

Bethphage, stopping some distance outside Jerusalem to eat and drink.

I drifted along with them, beginning to feel just a trifle bored and useless. I had set my pace to theirs for the better part of that day, and was not accustomed, in my astral state, to being so tied to the cumbersome speed of the World, or, in fact, to time, from which dimension I had so gladly slipped away.

I was therefore relieved when the small party at last breasted a rise, barely a quarter of a mile from the tiny hamlet of Bethphage, and I saw Joseph point to a field ahead where, so he told Simon, 'they would release the donkeys and let them rest and feed'.

The poor animals were only too glad to be free, having covered the better part of twenty-two miles that day. Joseph unlatched and opened the gate into the field, unharnessed the she-ass from between the shafts, then sent her off into the paddock with an affectionate slap, closely followed by her colt.

For a short while Joseph and Simon watched their two donkeys as they gambolled and pranced about on the short, dry grass, before settling down to the more serious business of feeding, their limbs loosened and more relaxed after their short spell of play.

Then Joseph, sturdy and powerful, picked up the two shafts, one in each hand, and pulled the cart the remaining short distance into Bethphage, through the village, and to the house of a friend of his on the other side — a tent-maker.

Here they were amongst friends and gladly welcomed, fed and rested, and stayed until the day of the Crucifixion. A convenient place, since it was scarcely three miles from Jerusalem.

I felt free to leave them there, so made my way back

to the field in which the two donkeys were feeding peacefully. I looked at them and wondered, and then felt certain that they, too, were a link in the chain. For a moment more I thought, before approaching the colt and putting out my hand to touch his muzzle. To my surprise he saw me, or at least knew of my presence, and was in no way afraid, only lifting his head to give vent to a tearing and awful sound, a bray that seemed to come from a heart that was heavily burdened, a heart that was bent but not yet broken.

I leant down and whispered words of comfort into one of his long ears; and I think he heard me, for his great, sad eyes rested full on mine for a long moment, before dropping his head again and cropping the grass, taking no further notice of my presence.

The long chains tying me to the World were galling, and in that moment a wearisome burden; so that when I felt an upward pull, I did not resist, but let myself be drawn away to drift gently into the arms of sleep.

beyond the limits of my poor words; thus you may glimpse the broken gate of near-despair, its parallel the stony path of the Cross, and then further by the same road to ultimate fullness and Godhead.

* * * * *

My astral self was being shaken like an aspen leaf in a high storm, my sleep broken into violently and abruptly. For a few wild moments I was bemused and could not find control, so that the winds about me battered as they willed.

Then fear took a hold on me; for before my eyes, and through the murk of speeding thoughts and cruelly buffeting ideas, I saw dimly the open maw of Hell, its red and hideous cavity of a mouth spewing forth a continuous, sickly essence of revolting depravity.

With the fear of desperation I exerted myself, willing my path through the clawing elements towards the Earth below, timorously exulting in the feel of power against these loosed forces of evil rushing past me, directed at some point on the World beyond my vision.

Down and along I swept through the early night, until I was better able to discern more detail in the moonlit land below me. In the distance I saw a concentration of faintly twinkling lights, and it was to this spot that my flight was directed. Then, in the moment that I hurtled through the air, I saw that the city before me was Jerusalem, while the land around seemed to fan out as I slowed and drew closer. Finally, only the Temple filled my view, and a moment later I landed as lightly as any feather in the north of the

THE BROKEN GATE

My next awakening was a rough introduction to a truly shattering series of experiences.

I awoke in the fullness of my powers, but engulfed in the crazy rush of a wild maelstrom of rampant evil in every face and form. Fortunately, for myself, I was not their object, and so was partially hidden from the brunt of their devilish and destructive actions; at least until I fought to escape from their insidiously, wrapping clutches.

But for the moment they whirled and spun in a frenzy of hate, whipping up their courage in a fanatical, mind-destroying dance; until suddenly, in a filthy sweat of evil desires, they stopped as one, then together swooped towards some distant spot on Earth, their number so great that they flowed in a seemingly never-ending stream, and from an apparently limitless and insatiable source.

The extremes are always with us, and closer than we are wont to think; and it was to be my fortune, both here and later, to be at one moment dragged down almost to the pit of Hell, and then at another to be lifted almost to the heart of Heaven. These experiences drew on all my strength and slender wisdom, yet withal I rose in the end.

Read on, therefore; read deeply, and seek to reach

district called Ophel.

The dark forces, against which I had fought when in the upper atmosphere, had declined as I had descended; until now, to my super-natural senses, they were little more to me than an overhead wind blowing towards the east, ominous and menacing, but not troublesome from where I stood.

A short while after landing, I felt a compulsion to move towards the south-east of the city; so, obeying the instinct, I drifted off through the quietening streets of Ophel, passing some men as they lay asleep wrapped in their mantles, and others as they still talked over the events of the day, gathered either in small groups on street corners, or under the dim lighting which spilled down from hanging lanterns in the front of some shops which were still open.

I soon passed through Ophel, and entered the adjoining district of Sion. But, after covering only a very short distance, my spirit again directed me, this time towards the great wall surrounding Jerusalem. I went on in accordance with the guidance within me, so that soon the lights of Sion were on my right, and I saw before me the Fountain Gate to this corner of the city. I passed through, and then down a path to the Kidron brook — normally dry, but flowing rapidly at this time of the year, its waters noisy, dark and turgid with shifting boulders, earth and a medley of mixed, natural flotsam accumulated over its course during the dry season, and now gathered up and being hurled impetuously down to the sea.

I crossed the small, crudely-made wooden bridge, and turned north-east up the Kidron valley. With the city now lying to my left I drifted on up the rough path, passed over the road from Jerusalem to Bethany,

and then turned right through a narrow gate into a large garden — the Garden of Gethsemane.

It scarcely seems possible in retrospect; but, while drifting through the streets of Ophel, over the Kidron's turbulence, and then up the valley to this garden, I had almost forgotten about the savage powers abroad this night, my mind so absorbed in the fact that I was following in the footsteps of Jesus and His disciples.

But now, once more, as I looked on this hedge-enclosed garden of fruit and olive trees, the rough sward sprinkled with colourful flowers of several varieties, I grew aware of the evil rushing over my head, its sound leathery, dry and hard, and heading for a spot beyond my sight.

I moved on, my feet, ghostlike, lightly brushing the tips of the grass, and very nearly stumbled on to a group of men seated in a circle, talking nervously together in hushed whispers. It was hardly surprising that I had so nearly missed them, for the night's sky was flecked with heavy clouds that came and went, the moon hidden at that moment, while the weak light was still further lost in the deep shadows cast over the group by surrounding trees.

I counted eight men in the gloom, and sensed them all as being in varying stages of shock and fear; while even the atmosphere about them was heavy with foreboding, depression and loss, drawing them together as they murmured in low voices, taking some comfort from their close proximity. By their speech it was plain that these men were Jesus' disciples — the very ones He had left in the Garden of Gethsemane while He went on to the Mount of Olives with Peter, James and John.

Inside me there rose a great anger; though not against these eight men, who could hardly be expected to control the destiny of the Son of Man, but rather that He, my God and my Father, should be left alone to face the Prince of Darkness in all his power.

Gathering my energies into a hard, consolidated knot of shining potency, I left the ground and streaked through the air, skimmed the further hedge to the garden, crossed a narrow road, swooped over a low, earthen wall, and then on up a small hill that was the Mount of Olives. Above me, as I moved at speed, I was aware that the forces of darkness were growing greater and more powerful as I invaded their paths of flight, their harsh, leathery rush and low wails becoming a spinning turbulence bedevilled with high-pitched screams of fury.

For a while they held back as though in surprise, but then fell upon me as I reached a point above where Peter, James and John sat and waited, entirely unaware of the grim tussle being waged so close over their heads. I fought with all the strength I had, and as I have never been called on to fight before or since, furiously hurling my God-given powers at these creatures from Hell until, here and there, they burst in sickly flashes, exuding sluggish waves of dirty gases and noxious smells, fumes that split, and then reformed into even uglier shapes that came at me again.

For some time the battle raged with no apparent advantage to either side, so that the demons seemed to grow disheartened and afraid, falling back a trifle and circling in dismay. In that brief moment I shook myself free from their weakened clutches and shot up and over the hill. But I had underestimated my

opponents, because again, with terrifying howls of savage, animal rage, they were on me with still greater force, tearing at my hair and ripping at my flesh with their razor-sharp claws, while all the time they filled the air with such pungent and evil-smelling gases, that my hair rose on end in horror, and my mind began to swim from their foul, intoxicating fumes.

Never, I firmly believe, has the World seen such a concentration of destructive evil and carnal ferocity — from the past, the present and the future, these forces were now united together in war.

But I cared not, for in wild glimpses, as I tumbled and turned, I saw a naturally-formed grotto some little distance before me, and Jesus on His knees in mortal agony.

Wounded and torn though I was, the rage within me swelled until it knew no fear, no bounds, no reason save that of going to Him, no action save that of fighting to shield Him from the torment He endured.

I fought on in silence, consolidating every urgent thrust of energy to hurl the more effectively at this filthy army. But my foes were loud in indignation, and my painful progress was accompanied by hideous screams of frustrated anger, flecked with wails of pain from those things I hurt. Slowly, very slowly, I gained ground, and knew beyond any doubt that I could, and would, win through in spite of all Satan's fiendish strength.

My astral body was torn and bleeding from a hundred wounds, my lungs filled with their nauseating stench; but withal my mind was sharp enough, and my strength linked to the Infinite and scarcely diminished — consequently I was always able to give more than I received, to wound and advance until, at last, they fled

from me in wild array, their banshee wails circling and penetrating into the grotto where Jesus still suffered the tortures of the damned.

How can I accurately define my thoughts in that moment of victory? They were too blurred and bruised, too glutted in black blood — but they were, I think, a little suffused in pride at what I had accomplished; though at the time I knew well enough that the power that sprung within me was not mine to command as mine own.

But my own self was no stranger to Heaven — a fact that was quickly borne out as I staggered a pace towards Jesus for in a flash a great bar of brilliant silver light shot across my path, effectively barring any further progress on my part.

I could not turn back, since I loved Him who knelt before me so greatly that my heart seemed to burn like fire. Neither could I go to Him, for to struggle against the bar of silver light would only have been to fight against that which was intrinsically the essence of myself.

Stricken, I bent my head and wept bitterly, the fine surge of power within me draining away with my falling tears, leaving me empty and helpless for a while; but shielded, at least, from evil, wrapped in the effulgence from the bar of silver light.

Then, while I sank in the dismal seas of defeat, knowing myself to be broken and nothing, I felt a light touch on my shoulder. I looked up slowly, hope flickering in my breast; 'Perhaps I would be allowed to pass? perhaps I could go to Him who knelt in pain before my eyes?'

But these thoughts were dashed away when my gaze fell upon the serene countenance of the bright being

before me. 'An angel, one of the Shining Ones, but greater than all others in Heaven', was the impression impacted on me in the first instant of seeing.

I looked and looked, my soul gripped in a vibrant beam of light from this personage to me, a beam redolent not only with the greatness of its sender, but also with a quality of insight which swept away as nothing all the borrowed greatness I had held, yet filling me with such searing penetration of thought that, during the space he looked on me, I saw deep and far into the mysteries of Life and Man, as the one bore, and the other brought about, the subjugation and Crucifixion of Christ.

Words alone can do little credit to the fullness and depth of this message, though its meaning was clear enough to me at the time. None the less, essentially I knew in that moment why Jesus had come to Man on Earth — not as the conquering Christ, but to impart a higher law based in love, and also to act as a mediator and sacrifice for all Man's sins for the past, the present, and the future.

This great truth needs reflection in depth if we are to grasp even lightly at its meaning. This depth I had imparted to me then; so that in these thoughts, turned to words in pictures, I saw the Son of Man bowed under such a weight of alien sin that only He, the Lamb of God, could carry its burden; then later, with His wings bent low, I watched Jesus lay this sacrifice and Himself at the feet of His Father in Heaven for the cleansing and redemption of Man.

I was shown that the origin of evil stemmed only from Man's own dark thoughts and actions in his freedom of will; so that evil became not just an abstract principle or force, but an active personal

power thrown in opposition to God. I saw, too, that the Devil — or Lucifer, to use his name — was no more than a freely-acting tool for testing from God's hands; a dark angel girt in the power and armour of Man's evil thoughts and deeds; a poor, sad angel who is the advocate of wrong thinking in the World; a fallen angel, though whether by decree or voluntary impulse was not shown to me, but, none the less, a full claimant on the laws and powers created by God Himself in the beginning.

I saw Lucifer as a personage of great beauty, but also seductive and alluring; yet withal another man of sorrows representing the other side to the coin of Life in balance — a side created by Man, and the one for which Lucifer was bound to toil, and enhance where he may and while evil exists.

I saw, too, that evil can never be beaten thoroughly in open war — save only at the end when Lucifer's stakes are drawn, and the issue already resolved in higher spheres; for warfare, in spite of the wrongs it sometimes seeks to overcome, carries within itself the seeds of self-destruction; seeds which, in time, only germinate and flourish in the compost of Man's ignorance and ever-ready scale of double standards.

Finally, I saw that evil must eventually perish by withering on the vine: a seed without soil, a plant without roots, beaten only by a lack of sustenance; and that this condition, in turn, could only be accomplished by Man turning back to the truth and source from which he sprang — but Man redeemed, Man strong in his freedom and Godhead, Man as a desirous and willing tool and servant in God.

In the main I can only write of these revelations in allegorical form, since their revealment and know-

ledge encompasses more breadth in media than the normal bonded mind has to see or use, their means of conveyance being in forms or states far above the vibratory boundaries we usually recognize on Earth.

So my words, even to the budding initiates, can do little more than point the direction for your thoughts to follow, explore and reflect; while to the worldly-wise and ignorant, to those who follow only the dictates of their appetites, my words will appear as merely foolish and nonsensical.

Most of us see only what we wish to see and, since all of us are what we think, the way of truth and reality is a hard road, disillusioning the nature in us, unclothing our pettinesses, and exposing ourselves to a more honest scrutiny. Even so, this is the only rewarding road, for when we disengage our spirits to leap the bounds of our physically imposed estates, we begin to see before our eyes the first striations of Life, etched in vivid colours and patterns, its letters written in the fire of Truth.

Very soon, too soon for my hungry spirit, the Shining One withdrew, and the bar of silver light faded and disappeared. Once more I was free to act as I willed, although I no longer had any wish to call on my returning strength to use in open battle.

If possible, my love for Jesus was even greater after what I had learnt, and in my calmer clarity of mind, than before when wrapped in the white-hot heat of fervour and rage. None the less, I knew I could only watch, and neither interfere in His sufferings nor help in His lonely battle. I could only share His burdens in part by seeing and feeling something of what Jesus Himself was going through — naught but a dumb and loving participant, a captive in Christ, and one man,

at least, to offer support from the World.

I stepped towards the grotto and fell on my knees by the side of Jesus, my whole body shaking, as much in love as from anticipatory fear. At once I was deluged in evil; forceful and dominating, sly and seductive, wooing and pressing at all my weakest points — the shock so severe that, had I not been well shielded and strongly upheld, I would have collapsed under the weight.

Then I looked across at Jesus, and was both humbled and strengthened from that which I saw, for what I suffered was only the backwash to the brunt that He bore. I gazed on His countenance bathed in sweat and prayed, and hung on to my sanity as best I might.

My mind rocked, then stabilized slowly, until I felt strong enough to face the silent horrors around me; the horrors of another World, in part a mirror of our own, but accompanied, in both quixotic and bizarre contrast, by the distant rush of the brook Kidron, and broken at intervals by the cry of the Roman sentinels on the towers of Antonia; reminding Jesus that He was even more alone now when destiny had taken Him by the throat, than He had been in the wilderness of Qarantal.

The anguish increased, and Jesus trembled as awful visions pursued Him, clearer and more distinct than before. Now even the cave was darkly lit with moving scenes suspended in the air of all the sins committed from the days of Adam to the end of the World. And while these pictures came and went, while Jesus was being taunted by the Devil, there came to me the knowledge that here, on Mount Olivet, Adam and Eve had taken refuge when they were cast out of Paradise.

Then, too, I became aware that the Devil did not know Jesus as He really was, did not know that here, in his apparent power, was the Son of Man, the Lamb of God. For a moment the face of the Devil was as the carnal face of Man, and I learnt and understood why it was that Lucifer could no longer recognize the face of God.

My mind blurred in the presence of Jesus' terrible agony, supported though I was. I remember my Lord falling on His face, overcome with awful sorrow for the World's sins and the almost total ingratitude of Man; while the cleverness of Satan, working cunningly on His pure mind and undefiled soul, twisted and wrenched at Jesus from every point until, at last, He grew terrified at the sight of all the horrors that He saw and felt, calling out loudly, "Father, if it is possible, let this chalice pass me by."

For a moment the attack diminished, and I saw tears on Jesus' face as He remembered; so that He went on, "But only as Thy will is, not as mine is."

The lull passed and in the midst of a storm of vicious evil I saw Jesus stagger to His feet shaken and bathed in a cold sweat, as weak as an old man, His lips bloodless and His hair on end in shock, and make His way over the brow of the hill to Peter, James and John.

I went with Him and was frightened at His wasted strength, while at the same time burning with love for this most pure and perfect man — since man He was on the Mount of Olives, and also for most of His remaining hours thereafter to His death, voluntarily stripping Himself of His Godhead to undergo and conquer the worst that carnal Man and Hell could offer.

Leaning against a tree to support His physical

weakness, pale and exhausted, Jesus looked down on His three disciples as they stirred from their sleep.

"Simon, sleepest thou?" He said most pitifully.

Then Simon woke fully, saw Jesus' ravaged state, and replied in a stricken voice, "Master, what has befallen thee? Must I call the other disciples? Ought we to take flight?"

But Jesus answered tiredly, "Were I to live, teach and perform miracles for thirty-three years longer, that would still not suffice for the accomplishment of what must be fulfilled before this time tomorrow. Call not the eight; I did not bring them hither, because they could not see my agonizing without being scandalized; they would yield to temptation, forget much of the past, and lose their confidence in me. But you, who have seen the Son of Man transfigured, may also see Him under a cloud, and in dereliction of spirit; nevertheless, watch and pray, lest ye fall into temptation, for the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

For a while Jesus spoke on with His disciples so that, although despondent, worn and travailed, His voice tugged at the very roots in me, as when on the hill near Ephraim, giving light to a medley of feelings so strong that I wondered why He could not apparently feel my presence. But in the same moment I knew this could not be, for I was out of time with Jesus on Earth, while yet being one in time as an observer; I could not, therefore, in any way disturb the pattern of events directly surrounding Jesus' passion.

This knowledge should have made me feel useless, lost and lonely, but somehow it did not. In ways more subtle than I can explain, or even fully understand myself, I knew that my presence, my love and my

sacrifice, were recognized in Heaven, were valued and weighed in the balance for Good; yet, and above all perhaps, I felt one with God, and joyed in my captivity.

Then Jesus left Peter, James and John, after once more bidding them to watch and pray, and returned to the grotto; straight away falling on His face, arms outstretched, and wrestled mightily in prayer so that He might be able to sustain a second long conflict with the darkness in Man.

* * * * *

I grew conscious, as I entered the grotto behind Jesus, that this time the ordeal was to come from another and more subtle angle, and to take a different form; for Satan and his legions were now inactive, relegated to the background, and watching silently as their places were taken by sad-faced angels who showed Jesus all He had to undergo to expiate Man.

Jesus was shown the image of God before the fall of Man; how great Man's true beauty when in purity of soul and mind, and how Man's beauty began to change when sin entered the World, becoming tarnished and scarred until, at length and in the future, there was nothing left of Man in perfection — only ugliness remained, an ugliness that was first the face of Man, and finally the whole of Man himself.

Jesus was then shown how all sin had originated in Adam; the terrible effects of physical and worldly lusts on the God-given powers of the soul; how Man withered and shrank within himself as the long years rolled by and he departed further and further from God, so that only here and there were flames of

brightness, standing out like lonely beacons on a night of increasing length and darkness; and then, as the night deepened and the air grew chill and dank, some of the flames began to weaken and shrink, while others wavered and distorted, and yet others grew thin and pallid, crushed and warped by Man's withdrawal from the source of Life and sustenance.

This grim scene, this life without God at the helm, was depicted from beginning to end in rapid, sweeping gestures, yet with an attendant lethargy that spoke more gruesomely than any words or pictures. But again, it is virtually impossible to describe these impressions with anything nearly approaching the clarity and coherence in which I received them. The best I can do is to symbolize them as a dying land withdrawing from Life, unstable in climate, blasted by both heat and cold, rainless, burnt, frozen and shrivelled, the sky red and angry, the earth infested with vermin, and the air fetid and stale.

And on this land I saw that the vermin lusted increasingly with an angry hunger but, not knowing where to direct their insatiable lust, since nothing gave them lasting satisfaction, they turned and lusted for each other; and then, their orgies were cold and lifeless, they rent and destroyed all that remained of that which was good, so that all things might be equal, and nothing be allowed to stand above their heads.

Finally, when everything noble and beautiful had been destroyed, when nothing sweet and pure remained over all the Earth, when the air stank and the ground turned sour, they turned upon each other with eyes burning like red-hot coals of flaming hate, with hearts full of savage murder and unleashed passions, and killed, and killed, and killed, until even

the strongest were torn to the ground to die in the trampled blood of their victims.

Thus I saw, with Jesus, the culminating bleakness of Man's soul as, with ever-increasing speed, he shut himself away from God; and thus, I felt, with Jesus, something of the appalling horror in what I saw, worse by far than all the filth that Satan could fling: for this was the 'desolation of desecration'; while Lucifer, at least, was still alive, though chained and sorrowing for the lost fruit of his toil.

Jesus groaned aloud in anguish and horror at the sight of so bitter an expiation, so that a bloody sweat broke out from the pores of His body; for He knew that only He, the Lamb of God, could intercede for Man when on such a slippery downward path; a burden that only He, the Son of Man, could bear to carry for His lost sheep. And Jesus did not turn away, no, not even when the weight of what He bore dragged Him to the ground.

Then Jesus was shown the natural slyness and ingratitude in Man; people of the past, the present and the future who took and never gave, nor even thought from whom they took, nor why they were entitled to the plenitude about them.

Jesus saw, too, how His deeds and words would be distorted to suit the avarice and fear in Man, and how even practising Christians would become hypocrites, at least in part, in order that the cloak of their beliefs might fit comfortably, and not prove a burden that they would have to bear apart from their convenience — thus uniting in falsity the world of Mammon to the word of God, and thinking to save themselves while still pleasuring freely in their lusts.

'Was it for this creature, Man, that Jesus had to

suffer so and die in agony? This creature who, if left to follow his whims, would only sink at last into utter degradation and death?'

These words span in my brain for a while; until I remembered that Man, in purity of soul and mind, was beautiful, made in the image of God, and the highest and noblest work in God's creation. I knew then that Man here on Earth had to have his chance, could not be condemned out of hand because of the sin in Adam, must be shown the light and truth once more and given a link, a personal link through Christ to God; a link that could sustain and hold those who would rise, in spite of the many who would cut themselves off and decline into the confines of nature.

Jesus gave several cries of pain heard by Peter, James and John, and was again dragged to the ground in mortal fear and anguish. This sight was too much for me, even from behind the safety of my shields, and I groped my way to the entrance to the grotto, leaning heavily against the rock and wringing my hands in helpless despair.

At that moment Peter appeared over the brow of the hill, his strong body trembling in apprehension, and his features etched clearly in their pallor. He came on to find his Lord, for Peter was a brave man, up to the very entrance to the grotto close to where I leant, so that he might better see the awful state that Jesus was in.

Utterly appalled, Peter's eyes glazed in fear and shock and he shook as in an ague. He reached forward to Jesus, but could not enter the grotto for his legs, like those of a sleepwalker, were no longer under his command, and in fact retreated to carry him steadily back over the hill to rejoin James and John.

Then the angels withdrew and again Satan came forward, cloaking himself in different forms of sin; appearing sometimes as a gigantic black figure, and at others in macabre, bestial shapes of weird and distorted carnivores. Once more Jesus drew himself together to face this new attack on the Mount of Olives and in one bleak moment I could feel the stabbing edge of loneliness, the gaping emptiness, in Him who was one with God, but who was now left to drink this gall alone.

And so began an attack on Jesus with serpents, swords, flails and spears, until His poor body writhed like a worm, and bled from a hundred wounds inflicted from the mind of Satan; for behind these evil intentions Satan had drawn most cunningly for his attackers. First came the spirits of the blind, those to whom the World clung with seductive fingers; people who, from the cheap composure of their niggling souls, had projected a fallible Christ of their own dimensions, distorting and undercutting reality until, at last, all that was left were men and women who leant on superstition and the mysteries of the occult, and who feared and hated because they would not look and see.

Then came the fanatics — those who, in their megalomaniac minds, sought not for truth, but only for their satisfaction in power at any price; often men of brains and talents, but always men whose ambitions had warped their minds into a continuous psalm of self-indulgent eulogy.

Then followed the comfortable — those who could not bear to be disturbed from their mental lethargy and sloth, who hated and suffocated the dwindling goad in their consciences; people who pandered and

prayed, but always at their ease.

Behind these some children ran into the grotto — those who had been born in darkness with the mark of Satan's teeth upon them, and others who had been misled by parents or teachers. At first glance their very youth and softness disguised the bleakness in their souls; but, on sighting Jesus, their faces changed, growing hard, spiteful, selfish and twisted in hate, while their young skins flushed in a single-minded orgy of sadistic fury as they turned, as one, and vented their blows and high-pitched obscenities on the body of Christ.

My mind sickened at the sight of so much cowardly evil and complacency, while my heart bled for the person of Jesus who, in His clean perfection, had to suffer this twisted travesty of truth and reality, this accumulated mountain of dirt and corruption from the dying Life in Man; for each evil that preyed on Jesus expanded and vaunted itself to the bounds of its attendant ills until, as they passed before my gaze, their rottenness extending to the limits of my sight, their presence seemed to fill the World; why, even Hope fell back and was pressed hard against the wall, her light dimmed in the heavy, almost viscid, fumes, and from the unutterable darkness which lay beyond.

But still there was more to come, for as the figures that had been, faded and passed from my sight, yet others stepped from the night. These were the impurities gathered together from all the churches — clad in cowl and hood, faceless, and in many colours that came and went, their bodies were tall and lissom, so that they bent and swayed to the mild winds about them. Then I noticed, here and there, that as a figure bent, it left a shadow which hardened,

drawing its form and strength from the fickle winds; and after a while these also began to sway to and fro, so that their numbers were always increasing as they moved until, at length, packed closer and closer, the grotto was filled, and they were forced to sway as one — like running ripples in a pond; but blind, faceless, senseless, and only drawing their movements from their neighbours.

I groaned, but opened my eyes wide to see beyond the crowded group of spiritless puppets, so listening, with my heightened perception, to the subtle winds of change as they laughed with an evil sigh, and with more than a hint of malice; for now these false priests had become self-enslaved, dulled by the softly soughing breezes, deluded and lulled by the cunning scents, and sapped and weakened in the soft airs; no longer any fit match for the strong winds of truth.

Then, of a sudden, they ceased their silly swaying, plucked red ivory spears from within their cloaks, and stabbed most brutally into the central heart of the church in the body of Christ; and, as they struck, heresies, distortions and lies flew from their faceless cowls as every blow went home, and went whirring, buzzing and screaming like angry hornets around the grotto.

Then these, too, passed on and away into the night, swallowed up in the eternal darkness that held their perverted minds in bondage.

Jesus cried out in pain, His voice cutting through me like a flaming arrow; and I realized, with greater clarity than ever before, the exquisite degree of agony of such torture on Him who is pure and perfect, by those who were base and fouled.

Then a deathly stillness fell in the grotto hanging

lifelessly in the air, flat, dry and empty; a breeding ground for loneliness, fear and failure; a nothingness in which Life had no place; a grave that was terrible in its absorbent void, sponging on Jesus' weak and battered state, drawing from Him relentlessly, sucking His very life-blood as a vampire sucks from its prey.

Jesus tottered to His feet, weighed down as under an impossible burden, and staggered from the grotto, then on and up over the hill to His three waiting disciples.

Peter, James and John had been sorely afraid and anxious; but now, when they saw Jesus coming towards them gaunt, pale and harried, and with eyes that stared in pain, they were stricken to their innermost depths so that, for a moment, they could not move, but only stare in horror.

Then Peter, who loved Jesus deeply, overcame his state of stunned inertia and started forward, closely followed by James and John. They ran to Jesus, put their arms about Him, and supported His frailty to the place where they had been told to wait.

I longed to help and give of what strength I had, although, Heaven knew, I was worn and torn enough myself. But I was caught in the web of my own time, and so could only repress my frustration and allow my mind to drift briefly back to those last most awful scenes which I had witnessed in the grotto.

However, my thoughts revulsed violently away from them, and turned instead to that lovely evening on a hill near Ephraim, drawing beauty and peace from when I had watched as the children had crowded round Jesus, only wanting to be in His presence and to be touched and blessed; an event that was vivid in my mind, but which now seemed to be such a very long

time ago. I wondered at what I had seen, and how greatly Jesus must have suffered from the children in the grotto.

After a period of painful discourse, I saw Jesus make signs to His three disciples that He must return to the grotto once more. I watched as they expostulated with Him, and then acceded in shame as Jesus was firm. Finally, with Peter's strong arm supporting our Lord, and accompanied closely by James and John, the four of them made their slow way back to the grotto.

As I followed behind them over the brow of the hill, I felt my sight being drawn like a magnet to where the remaining disciples were waiting for Jesus. They were some distance away in the Garden of Gethsemane, although this made no difference since, although I could not actually see them, I was able to look into their minds more surely than if I had been in their midst.

The eight disciples were fearful and trembling; for when Jesus had stripped Himself of His Godhead to contend in the grotto for the souls of mankind, His spirit had ceased to support these men, so that by now they were empty and drained, while some of the weaker amongst them were beginning to slip away in the darkness, fleeing towards the near-by village of Bethphage.

When the four men reached the entrance to the grotto, the disciples reluctantly left Jesus, and returned over the hill to the place where they had waited before. Jesus had bidden them to pray and so, although weary to the bone from their long day and shaken to the core of their inner selves, they knelt as one and did as they had been bidden for as long as

they were able.

This last phase of Jesus' passion on the Mount of Olives was different again from the two that He had suffered before. Now angels showed Him the lives and deeds of past, present and future saints, as well as many others whom the World would never know. Jesus was shown their love and loyalty and all that they had achieved to succour His soul.

This experience strengthened our Lord, preparing Him to be shown next all the details of what He would have to suffer, from the time of His arrest to the moment when He was to die on the Cross.

After these visions, Jesus bowed His head humbly and fell in fate, giving Himself up entirely to the will of His Father in Heaven; while before Him stood the same powerful angel who had earlier barred my path with the beam of silver light, and who now gave Jesus to eat and drink of Holy sustenance. And as Jesus ate and drank, strength coursed through Him like a river of fire until, for a space, His spirit was drawn beyond my sight into realms of peace and meditation.

* * * * *

I waited as patiently as I could, the grotto now filled with vibrant Life. But my strength was depleted beyond my own ability to recover, while the high vibrancy in the grotto could in no way touch me for I was too far out of time with this event, and the beneficent rays could do little more than brush their wings on my outworn and wasted frame.

Then my mind was loosened, and sharp pains ran over and through my head, their persistency blurring my thoughts and further weakening my spirit limbs.

Yet, at the same time, so great was my love for Jesus, so complete my trust in Him, that I knew my poor state and poverty in power could only be in sacrifice for some great and richer purpose than the drained, bleak emptiness which faced me now like a sheer wall of smooth ice, internally striated with lines of pain-drawn blood.

I left the grotto, my legs splayed slightly to hold my balance and save my strength, and went near by to lean heavily against an olive tree. The air was cool and still, but I was not, and even the time in which I stood appeared to flicker and distort — events came all at once, or not at all; while often there were unseen gaps, voids in eternity that passed me by, breaking up and disconnecting the sequence of the flow in life.

I pray you, my reader, therefore to forgive these aberrations, these enormous gaps in what follows; for not until the beginning and the end was I to be again master of my mind and myself, not for forty-three days was I to be lifted up once more into the penetrating clarity of spirit. During the coming interim I was to suffer in breakdown, half in and half out of myself, seeing a little here and a little there, enduring the cushioned agony of my lost self in a maelstrom of pain and wonder — a turbulence to which I was over-sensitive, while helpless in its grip.

But I will relate as I remembered and as I saw, but only as far as I am permitted to reveal. I can do no more, for even as I write the clouds which gathered about me then are descending, dark and ominous, binding my soul so that it cringes in fear and flutters against the bars that drag my wings in bondage.

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After a while I saw Jesus rise and walk from the grotto. He was stronger, but changed and covered by the marks of His toil and agony. For a moment He stood quietly, then turned and walked up the hill, passing close to the tree where I leant, the warm radiance of His inner light washing over me. But in a minute He was gone, over the hill and back to Peter, James and John, and with His passing I was cast again into the cold deserts of sterility and loneliness.

Dulled and stupid, I laboured after Him, my limbs leaden and uncertain, and my mind no longer able to move me at will and at nearly the speed of thought.

I came upon Jesus as He stood looking rather wistfully down on His three disciples, who soon began to stir in their sleep and wake under the influence of His presence.

Jesus sighed deeply, and in a tone of infinite compassion said to the three men, "Sleep and take your rest hereafter; as I speak the time draws near when the Son of Man is to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go on our way; already he that is to betray me is close at hand."

The three men rose to their feet and looked in wonder at Jesus after His trials; for He was different, and not only in the manner of his strengthened state. But after this I could see little more, since strange forces were drawing me away to whirl helplessly in the wild winds of war that surrounded me.

I clung to my sanity like a frightened child, holding on tightly to my faith and love in Jesus, this most wonderful man, and remembering, too, the words from the angel who had barred me with the beam of silver light. I held grimly to these central thoughts as an unhinged weakness sapped at my mind, and while

all else about me was being swept away in a hideous madness.

Dimly I remembered Jesus and His disciples passing through the olive grove towards the road which divided them from the Garden of Gethsemane, while already, not far ahead, could be seen and heard a large multitude of people making their way up the same road towards the Mount of Olives — a hundred burning torches winking and flickering through the heavy foliage at the silent quartet.

And then I fell, my last memory of this scene being the moving light on Jesus' face: and what a face to remember — all Life was written thereon, all love, all depths; the features swallowed in the Man behind, so that only the transparent sight of Him could satisfy and fulfil.

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Thrown about and buffeted in a state of timeless insecurity, my feet suddenly jarred on the hard, unyielding ground, and some semblance of stability entered into me as I felt the slight roundness of paving stones underfoot.

It was night, though dawn's first blush showed to the east, and I was in the courtyard of the palace of Caiaphas. The iron doors to the palace itself had just been flung open, and from the opened doorways surged a small crowd of priests and Jewish guards with Jesus in their midst torn and bleeding, weary and outworn, and marked with a terrible wound on one side of His face; a blow that had broken His nose and contused His cheek so that the flesh was swollen and blue, a blow such as could have been inflicted by one

of the heavy metal gauntlets carried by some of the guards.

Furthermore, to add to Jesus' sufferings, His hands were lashed behind His back, and long ropes ran from these lashings into the hands of some of the guards; men of cruel and vicious countenance, who tugged first one way and then another, brutally laughing at the discomfiture of the prisoner — so that Jesus, weakened already from interrogation and torture, reeled almost helplessly from side to side, scarcely able to maintain His balance.

A figure of fun, yet, withal, His demeanour was that of a king; His presence so royal on His first appearance in the courtyard that a hush fell on all the people scattered about, broken only by rough curses and lewd ejaculations from the base soldiers who held the bonding ropes — men degraded and blackened, their souls withered, shrunk and ugly while they remained willing slaves to Satan.

The cortège came on slowly — the soldiers and priests not to be denied their pleasure — and my eyes turned away in horror and disgust, only to alight on a donkey, a foal. I moved closer, for there was something about the beast which rang a chord in my memory.

I reached out to touch the animal's neck; but my hand passed through the rough coat and underlying flesh, falling slackly to my side in weariness and despair. The foal was not aware of my presence, could not know of it, though his attention, anyway, was riveted on the person of Jesus.

None the less, I recognized the animal — for this was the very same foal which had belonged to the old man, Joseph; the very same which had run alongside

his mother when she had drawn the cart with the newly carved Cross from Ephraim to Jerusalem, and whom I had last seen in a field outside Bethphage.

Then, also, I saw the spectral shape of a boy with an arm about the foal's neck; a lad of eleven or twelve years of age, dark-haired, fair-skinned, and clothed in a fashion which reminded me of Switzerland or Austria, or perhaps even the Southern Alps in Germany.

I looked the boy full in the face, but he, too, could not see me; although I was aware of a sense of comradeship between him and the foal, and this in spite of their difference in time and state.

A great loneliness swept over me, for I knew that my condition and vibrations were higher than theirs, and that my form, in the shadow of Christ and the Cross, must, of necessity, step high and alone to feel something of the vale of desolation through which Jesus trod for the sake of Man.

Again I felt myself swaying in insecurity, but steadied just as my sight began to blur, for a most remarkable and wonderful thing was about to happen. Jesus, with the group of priests and soldiers, was nearly opposite me when the foal by my side tensed, shivered, and then trotted forward to Jesus' side, leaning against Him so that Jesus might be supported in His weakness and against the cruelly, tugging ropes.

The grim procession stopped, and a silence fell on all the people; a silence so deep and long as to be almost tangible.

Jesus bent and whispered something into the nearer of the foal's long ears, though I could not hear what He said. Then, of a sudden, a loud scream from some

woman in the crowd rent the magic moment. In a second several men fell on the poor beast, tearing him, kicking and struggling, from Jesus' side; a moment later, with clubs and staves, they were bludgeoning the poor animal to death, until it fell, first to its knees and then on to its side; a broken, bloody and awful spectacle which rocked my last slender vestiges of strength, shaking my mind from the scene, and casting me spinning off again into the limitless void and my own lonely hell.

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The equilibrium between a state of balance and unbalance is fine indeed, its margin a hair only while we stand alone in finite mind.

So I hung on to my sanity, for I loved Jesus, and had seen too much to be in any doubt as to the true source of Life. I was, therefore, fortunate since there was no need for me to bend my heart and prevaricate the issue. But, oh, I was tired and helpless in all other ways; so little was I that the tremendous hate and forces for evil pushed and pulled at me almost as they willed, carrying me again and again perilously close to the brink of submission and madness.

But my faith and knowledge had become a part of me, making it impossible for us to be separated this side of eternal death; and death was a power that Lucifer did not possess — not, at least, without the willing participation of the corrupt and dying in soul.

My glimpses of Christ's passion lessened and became more fleeting, while my bondage in His shadow became tighter and more severe, the vicious hatred against me stronger and more violent. But I

had already seen the worst that Satan could do while I had been with Jesus on the Mount of Olives; consequently, though I had not His strength to bear the brunt alone, I had gained sufficiently in love and knowledge to withstand the onslaughts in the shadow of His bleeding feet on the path of the Cross, to hold my ground on the seed of truth.

However, and perhaps above all, I had imbued in me such a deeply-rooted horror of being torn away from the Light, that nothing could beguile me from my Jesus; my Lord and Master who was now suffering most terribly at the hands of sinners, more frightfully than we can understand, because He and His Father alone know the closed circle of the beginning and the end, the heart of Life and the heart of Man.

Jesus had descended to suffer, with His reality and memory in a state of perfection. But I — I had been drawn upwards to suffer, and my reality and memory were not so far distant from the hell I saw and felt.

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Briefly, and showing itself more terribly and clearly than I can ever properly describe, I saw the conclusion to the scourging of Jesus. His body was naked and bent as a bow over a low, blood-stained post, while to hold Him His hands were lashed into rings set into the base of the wood; thus He was almost fully exposed to two of the most savage instruments of Roman torture, the scourge, wielded by a pair of strongly-built flagellants; one man fairly tall and the other short, so that the cuts on Jesus' body were criss-crossed in pattern, while the encircling chains and weights hissed through the air and literally tore His flesh into

ribbons.

My own agony at this sight was more than I could bear, and I turned to the crowd to see if there were any who had pity or sorrow in their hearts. However, I saw little good in the faces of the onlookers, though their reactions varied from person to person. Some few relished the spectacle in silence, their thoughts warped and sadistic; others, at least more open, were vociferous and coarse in their united mood of blood-seeking mob madness — a human herd that screamed at and exhorted the sweating flagellants to strike the harder. Then, also, I saw a group of lascivious women, lewdly mocking and reviling the naked and bloodied body of Christ.

My last visions of this most utterly savage scene were filled with pathos. Jesus, beaten to the ground and nearly insensible, His body so lacerated it was a wonder He still lived, turned His ravaged face to look briefly at the group of harlots who had been watching the scene with such indecent curiosity. As one, these women were shamed and fell silent, filtering back through the crowd until they finally disappeared from sight.

My person rocked and swayed under my inner tension and the forces of the moment; but my sight was just sufficient to see Jesus being untied and roughly hauled to His feet by two of the flagellants who had been resting from their gruesome labours, and then supported before being taken to face Pilate again — for Jesus had no more strength in His limbs, and I had no more sight in my eyes.

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The green pastures called enticingly to my shocked

and exhausted mind, and I knew in that moment that I could have chosen to depart entirely from these scenes of Jesus' passion. But I would not, for my love for Him ran from the roots of my being, and only grew the deeper and firmer as my own spirit and mind sagged the more in weakness.

So my stubbornness was next 'rewarded' by the sight of Jesus carrying His Cross-beam up some roughly carved stone steps, with houses and buildings overhanging and pressing closely in on either side.

Jesus was bowed under the weight of His burden, His steps slow, heavy and faltering, His whole manner and gait showing His utter exhaustion and distressed state. Then He fell, and I think He must have fallen before. The Roman guards uncurled their whips, then brought them down with whistling cracks on to his unprotected body, but Jesus had not the strength to rise under the burden of the Cross-beam of cypress wood.

Then two things happened, both of them at much the same time. A large, well-built man, Simon of Cyrene, was taken by the Romans from among the bystanders to bear Jesus' Cross-beam. This he did reluctantly at first, grumbling, and only because Roman law gave him no option to avoid impressment. But when he drew closer to Jesus and met Jesus' eyes, eyes which looked through him most piteously, searching out the depths of his soul, Simon's whole attitude underwent a most remarkable change, for at once he willingly stooped and picked up the Cross-beam, and helped Jesus to His feet at the same time.

While this scene was being enacted, I grew aware of another drama being played out behind my back.

Turning, I saw a group of children, with a few adults scattered amongst them, jeering, cursing, and spitting at the body of Jesus and over the steps on which His bleeding feet had trodden. In their midst I saw Joseph, his face contorted in pain; but inactive, wisely knowing his helplessness in the appalling situation.

Beside Joseph stood Simon, but a Simon transformed into a small, energized bundle of barely contained rage; his blue eyes were hot, and blazing with such disgust and anger that I knew he would not be able to contain himself for long.

Joseph was preoccupied with Jesus' sufferings, and also with his own torment in soul; why, the very beam he had so carefully carved as a part of the Cross from the great cypress tree on instructions from the angel, this wood, heavy and rich with Life, had now borne Jesus to the ground. Joseph understood, yet he still shook under the memory of the grim task which had been his to accomplish, as he had also to contain his passions against the terrible fate being performed before his very eyes. Unwittingly his hold on Simon's hand relaxed and loosened. In a flash the boy tore himself free, hurling his slight body between the few children and adults who separated him from the barrier of Roman soldiers.

So unexpected was his dash, and so intense his love and anger, that Simon very nearly managed to slip his way through to Jesus' side; only at the last moment a quickly acting soldier ran the butt of his spear between the boy's legs, tripping him so that he fell heavily to the ground.

Reaching down, the soldier roughly, but not unkindly, threw the boy back into the crowd of children. Simon sprang to his feet unhurt, and again

flung himself at a space between the soldier who had thrown him back and another. This time he was met by a growl of annoyance, and the hard, unyielding butt of the soldier's spear struck forcefully into his chest, knocking the wind from Simon's lungs, and sending the boy reeling back into the crowd of half-maddened children.

They were on to Simon immediately — kicking, punching, and striking him with feet, fists, and light clubs which a few of the boys had in their hands.

Joseph could not have been much more than five yards away when Simon had been thrown to the ground. Acting with surprising alacrity for a man of his advanced years, Joseph threw all of his great strength into the fray, surging towards Simon like a ship through a rough sea, casting aside both adults and children as though they were little more than rag dolls, and leaving behind him a wake of disruption and chaos.

Within ten seconds Joseph had reached Simon's side. But already it was too late for at a glance it was obvious that the boy was mortally wounded and dying fast, not from wounds received from the children, although their viciousness had bloodied and disfigured Simon quite badly, but because some adult, either in a fit of blind malice, or due to the press of the crowd and his subsequent inability to maintain balance, had stepped fully on to Simon's chest with all his weight, crushing in the boy's light rib cage against the hard cobbled stones on which he had lain.

The crowd eased back a trifle, temporarily shocked at what had happened so quickly and in the heat of the moment; nevertheless, there were still some poorly stifled mutterings as Joseph knelt and raised the boy

gently into his strong arms. Simon was still conscious, though he was fast ebbing away, his eyes glazing as death began to take its hold, but still he managed a broken smile and, as Joseph bent his grey head to kiss the boy, he caught Simon's painful whisper, "You were right, Grandfather, you were right. We will be together again very soon."

Then Simon died, and my fading sight was filled with Joseph's face suffused in tears; but a man for all that, standing as a rock looking over the boy's limp body into the calm and tender eyes of Jesus, his love and loyalty undiminished, although his heart was broken for the boy.

This time I was drawn away more gently, so that I saw Jesus stagger on, His every step an agony and a fight against His weakness and battered state. But at least it was something that He was now unburdened of the Cross-beam by Simon of Cyrene; yet even in this I saw the apparent mercy only as a fear that Jesus might die before He reached Calvary, thus depriving the people of the Crucifixion and their full satisfaction in blood.

I also carried away with me the picture of an old man, Joseph, standing alone in a crowd composed mainly of wolves and jackals; a broken man, yet invincible in Christ; a lonely man, yet one with Jesus; a man who held in his strong arms the body of the only person who, in his later years, had been close and dear to him on Earth — the child, Simon, even now emerging from his body as a most lovely soul, strong and pure.

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The sensations which now afflicted me were such as to be beyond any literal descriptive ability. I saw no more of our Lord in the flesh; but as behind a dark curtain my soul marched with His on the road to Calvary, my hands and feet were pierced with His, and my spirit was caught and bound in such a fashion that I could scarcely catch the ethers of Life into my lungs — and then only with great agony and effort.

I was racked, alone and thirsty — my God, I was thirsty! A thirst which came near to driving me mad, for the waters of Life were denied me, so that I shrank in upon myself and withered under the hot and fetid breaths of evil minds.

I was caught in Hell, and grew afraid and cried out in my anguish. Yet I knew I could endure, since the endurance required of me was but the shadow of the terrible sufferings that Jesus was undergoing at this very moment, my sufferings but a mite of what He had to tolerate and endure.

For nearly three hours this agony of soul and mind was a clawing, tearing part of me; until at last, as the long hours dragged on and as I came nearer to the end, even my memory of Jesus began to waver and grow dim. Yet still I managed to cling desperately to my love and faith, keeping these whole and with me in the wilderness where I was bound.

And then, just when I felt that my starved spirit could endure no more, as my mind was caving in and about to fall away in ruins, I heard Jesus cry with a loud voice, a voice which rang with pathos throughout all the furthest reaches and depths of Limbo. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Life hung in balance, and I waited in trepidation; for I knew that both His end and His beginning were

almost upon Him — and perhaps mine too, for I had grown careless of my life on Earth, and wanted nothing more than to be at home with Him for ever.

Again Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit," and yielded up His spirit as He said it.

The Heavens thundered and rolled together in vivid flashes of lightning; the Temple veil was rent from top to bottom revealing the emptiness behind, while from the graves of people long dead rose saints to wander about the streets in Jerusalem. But as these things happened, instantly, and in a way that I cannot know, I saw Jesus' spirit shoot like a meteor into the ground at the foot of His Cross, forming a deep rift between the Cross of cypress from the Tree of Life and that of Gesmas, the unrepentant thief.

At the same time I felt a sharp and terrible pain shear through me; and then I was free, sloughed free from the body in which I had been clad, refined and burning in a state of still higher vibrations; vibrations so fine and powerful that the evil demons about me fell back in alarm before the invisible hurricane of love, wilting to nothing as they met my flaming gaze.

Then I, too, shot into the ground, passing through the heavy layers with the ease of a razored knife through butter.

For three days, recognized, and as an accompanier of Jesus, I went with Him through all the halls of Purgatory, Hell and Death.

But of these I may not speak for a seal was put upon my lips. Man has far to go and much to learn before these secrets may be fully exposed to his touch, however, let him look deeply into his own heart, for much of the answer lies therein.

A seal, too, was put upon me for most of what I saw into after the Resurrection of Jesus, since here the Holy Ghost must work from within: knowledge gained without effort, strife and merit is as salt without its savour — impossible of true acquisition, sterile, worthless, worldly and distorted by self-interests until, at the close of our short day, it is fit merely to be cast aside. Jewels of truth may only be spoken about and truly understood by those who suffer and work to sense deeply into the heart of Life, thus reading beyond the limited power of the written word, and attuning themselves to the breath of God.

For forty days after His Resurrection there was a subtle change in Jesus. He was more ethereal, more completely linked to His real estate; even His earthly form appeared as a garment borrowed under stress, while yet being His own outer limits in vibration. Jesus' whole self, in fact, was more nearly one with His Father in Heaven. Consequently, to show Himself and abide by the laws and vibrations of nature, now that He was no longer forcibly linked to physical life in His carnal body, proved to be an ever-increasing strain.

The task was achieved and the knot loosened; the sins of Man washed out in blood; the link between God and Man offered, and the path to Heaven clearly shown to all those who chose to follow the example of Jesus' perfect life on Earth.

So it came about, on the fortieth day after His Resurrection, that I saw the last of Jesus from His mission to Man in his own environment; for the day of His Ascension into Heaven had come, from a hill near the village of Bethany close to Jerusalem. Jesus was clad in a garment as white as snow, seamless, and with no pockets, when a white cloud descended and

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gathered about Him. Then, in its midst, the Son of Man was lifted up from the sight of His disciples and the World.